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Evaluation of Public Participation
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Lucie Laurian & Mary Margaret Shaw

▶ **Introduction**

In recent decades, the United States has experienced an increase in expected and actual citizen involvement in local governance and decision making. Political scientists and planning and public policy researchers and practitioners call for improvements in direct participatory processes (e.g., Healey 1993; Jasanoff 1996; Forester 1999; Schlozman 2002; Beierle and Cayford 2002; Font 2003; Depoe, Delicath, and Elsenbeer 2004). This popular view of democracy translates into a series of federal laws, such as the public input requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and most public agencies are mandated to involve citizens in decisions that directly affect them.

The planning profession has long embraced this participatory view of democratic decision making. Planning theory followed changes in democratic ideals from representative to participatory models in the 1960s and 1970s, e.g., with Friedman's transactive planning model (1973). Since the communicative turn of the 1980s and 1990s, planning theorists support more deliberative, or discursive, models that emphasize inclusive dialogue, mutual learning, and collective problem-solving (Beauregard 2003; Forester 1999; Innes 1996; Innes and Booher 1999; Healey 2005). They build on Dryzek's "discursive democracy" (1990, 2000) and Young's "communicative" democratic model (1990, 1995, 2000). As citizens' democratic ideals and expectations also shifted toward inclusive and deliberative involvement in local governance, planning practice increasingly focused on public participation. The American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) code of ethics emphasizes public participation and deliberation by stating that the public interest should be "formulated through continuous and open debate" and by emphasizing public information and giving "people the opportunity to have a meaningful impact on the development of plans and programs that may affect them" (APA 2005, A. 1. e).

The extensive literature on participation discusses the goals and expected benefits of participation, e.g., identifying solutions, facilitating implementation, increasing the legitimacy of planning agencies, increasing community empowerment and capacity-building, or fostering social capital. It also discusses the applicability of various mechanisms to different settings and goals. In-depth case studies describing public participation processes have identified factors affecting the success and failure of participation, such as distortions in communication, power dynamics, and unequal distributions of knowledge (e.g., Forester 1989; Flyvbjerg 1998a, 1998b) as well as the

Abstract

Public participation has become a central element of planning activity over the last decades. The planning literature has given considerable attention to participation in theory and practice, discussing its benefits for democratic governance, its multiple goals and criteria for assessing success. Although planning academics and practitioners understand the importance of participation and know that participatory processes often fail, the field of participation evaluation lags behind. This paper explores how often, why and how planners evaluate participation in practice. It builds on data collected through a nationally representative survey of 761 AICP-certified planners. We find that they rarely evaluate participation formally. Informal evaluations rely on a wide range of criteria about participation processes and outcomes consistent with the criteria identified by planning theory. The paper presents these evaluation criteria and the practices and recommendation of the planners with most experience in participation evaluation.

Keywords: *public participation; evaluation*

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positive impacts of participation, e.g., on citizens' perceptions of agencies' responsiveness and performance (Halvorsen 2003).

Despite considerable attention given to public participation in planning practice and research, the field of participation *evaluation* lags behind. Published evaluations of participation are scarce and tend to rely on few case studies. Planning professionals and academics lack definitions and criteria of success in participation as well as methods to assess participatory processes. It is thus difficult to compare findings over time or across agencies to determine what methods work best in specific settings and to propose ways to improve participation. While participation evaluation should build on theoretical considerations and on the goals of each participatory processes (as identified by theorists, practitioners, and participants), progress in participation evaluation needs to first build on an understanding of practitioners' current evaluations (or lack thereof). Yet, the planning literature has not addressed whether, when, how, and why participation is evaluated in practice.

To begin to address this knowledge gap, the American Planning Association sponsored a national study of the evaluation of participation in planning practice. This first nationwide review of the topic seeks to explore this important dimension of planning practice and answer the following general research questions: How frequently, when, why, and how do AICP-certified planning practitioners evaluate participation? Our analysis builds on data collected through a random internet-based survey of AICP members practicing in the United States. A nationally representative sample of 761 AICP planners responded to the survey and twenty-four planners who regularly evaluate participation responded to a more detailed follow-up about why and how they evaluate participation.

The article first discusses the importance and complexity of public participation, derives a set of evaluation criteria based on the goals of participation, and discusses challenges for the evaluation of participation. Next, we present the research objectives, the methodology, and data used to identify current practices. Third, we present the findings of the analysis—which are descriptive given the exploratory nature of the research—and we discuss practitioners' recommendations and their implications for planning practice, research, and education.

▶ Participation and its Evaluation

In this article, we define participation as a mode of relationship between the state and civil society that involves the public in decision making. In contrast with top-down or command-and-control relationships, it seeks to increase popular influence over government policies (McLaverty

2002). Participation is thus understood as the "mechanisms intentionally instituted by government to involve the lay public, or their representatives, in administrative decisionmaking" (Beierle 1998, 15). These include traditional public hearings and meetings, as well as deliberation, consensus building, and collaborative management efforts, and exclude conventional political influence (e.g., voting) and extralegal methods (e.g., strikes).

Importance of Participation, Mechanisms, and Barriers

Public participation in government decisions is important for many reasons and can strive to achieve a variety of goals. Participation is a significant element of direct democracy as it promotes transparent, inclusive, and fair decision-making processes that entail some degree of power sharing between government agencies and members of the public (Arnstein 1969). It can increase the responsiveness of government institutions to citizens' values and interests (e.g., Verba 1969; ACIR 1980; McAllister 1980; Stewart, Dennis, and Ely 1984; Kasperson, Golding, and Tuler 1992; Innes 1996) and promote the consideration of all concerned and affected citizens (e.g., Zimmerman 1986; NRC 1996; Leib 2004). It can support the identification of acceptable decisions and enhance the quality of decisions and their legitimacy (Offe and Preuss 1991; NRC 1996; Dryzek 1997; McLaverty 2002; Innes and Booher 2000, 2002; Susskind et al. 1999), as well as the legitimacy of government institutions (Habermas 1996; Cohen 1997; Raimond 2001). At the individual level, participation can promote selfdevelopment, citizenship, and commitment to the public good (Rousseau, De Tocqueville, Mill, in Mansbridge 1995). Participation can increase citizens' trust in public institutions (Berry, Portney, and Thomson 1993; Thomas 1998), although it also can engender distrust when participants feel ignored, disrespected, or manipulated. Finally, participation can raise public awareness of local issues (Bowler, Donovan, and Tolbert 1998) and increase social inclusiveness and social capital (Putnam 1993, 2000; Innes 1996).

In planning, the rise of civil society and the strengthening of direct democracy translate into an increased emphasis on communication, deliberation, collaboration, and negotiation (Forester 1993; Flyvbjerg 1998a, 1998b; Sager 1994; Barber 1984; Habermas 1987; Beauregard 2003). Participation is tackled through a variety of planning perspectives, including advocacy and equity planning (Davidoff 1965; Krumholz 1982; Krumholz and Forester 1990), planning theories emphasizing transactive planning and mutual learning (Friedman 1973), collaborative planning (Healey 1993, 1996, 1998; Innes 1996; Innes and Booher 2000, 2002), communicative action and rationality (Forester 1989), critiques of power in communicative practice (Baum 1994; Flyvberg 1998a, 1998b), and radical

planning (Birkeland 1991, 1999; Sandercock 1998). These theoretical perspectives tend to support moving beyond traditional participatory mechanisms (public hearings, meetings) and toward more open, dialogical, and deliberative participation formats.

Participation is organized using a variety of more or less deliberative mechanisms. Hearings and notices followed by comment periods inform the public and gather a limited set of views in a nondeliberative framework (Checkoway 1981; Kemp 1985; Kemmis 1990; Moote, McClaran, and Chickering 1997; Adams 2004). More deliberative mechanisms are usually seen as better suited to promote meaningful participation (Margerum 2002; Healey 1993, 1996, 1998; Forester 1999). Public meetings are the most common but they vary widely in the degree to which they provide for meaningful deliberations (Cogan 2000). Citizens Advisory Boards (CABs) are more recent but widely used forums for providing ongoing discussions between agencies and stakeholders (Raimond 2001) but selected evaluations of CABs have shown that they may not always provide for meaningful public input (Laurian 2005). Other deliberative mechanisms include taskforces, workshops and charettes, consensus-building processes (Innes 1996), conflict resolution, mediation processes, and regulatory negotiations (Susskind and Field 1996; Susskind and Cruikshank 1987). Citizen juries (Armour 1995; Leib 2004), consensus conferences, and deliberation days (Ackerman and Fishkin 2000; Fishkin 2003) are other innovative, but still rarely used, formats. Participation can thus fulfill multiple goals and take multiple forms, and Rosener emphasized the importance of selecting participatory mechanisms based on the goals that participation seeks to achieve (1978).

Participatory processes encounter a wide array of barriers, which pertain to traits of agencies and participants, processes, and outcomes. Public agencies are sometimes seen as uncommitted to participation or unresponsive to public input. Committed planners may lack in experience or knowledge of local issues. Participants are often unrepresentative of the populations affected by the decisions at hand (Verba et al. 1993, Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995; Fellowes and Kershaw 2002; Schlozman 2002; Mazmanian and Nienaber 1974). In addition, participation formats may not allow all views to be expressed, may be intimidating, lack in fairness and transparency, or may take place too late to influence decisions. Distrust among stakeholders, between agencies, and public distrust in government institutions can also discourage participation (e.g., Raimond 2001; Cvetkovich and Earle 1994), and administrators' distrust in citizens reduces their willingness to promote participation (Yang 2005, 2006). When it occurs, participation can be distorted if participants are uninformed, misinformed, or manipulated by powerful interests (Verba 1961; Dennis 1977; Selznick 1949; Ingram and Ullery 1977; Dennis 1977; Zimmerman 1986; Tauxe 1995; Stokes 1998; Mansbridge 1994). Finally, participation

can fail when participants have limited impacts on decisions (Sewell and Coppock 1977; Stewart, Dennis, and Ely 1984; Beierle and Cayford 2002).

► Importance of Evaluation, Challenges, and Evaluation Criteria

Given the importance and frequent failures of participatory processes, their evaluation is essential to improve practice (Chess 2000). Evaluation is an essential step of the rational-adaptive planning model whereby plans, policies, and practices are designed, implemented, and then evaluated or monitored to guide the next round of plans, policies, and practices (Kaiser, Godschalk, and Chapin 1995). We would thus expect evaluation to be a regular, or common, element of all participatory processes.

Evaluations can be planned (and provided for) from the outset of the process and conducted in an ongoing fashion to improve participation as it unfolds, or can be conducted post hoc to improve future practice or for knowledge-building. Evaluations can be conducted by the organizers of participatory processes, which may pose problems if they are seen as "evaluating themselves," or by "neutral" observers, e.g., mediators or researchers. In any case, participatory processes should be evaluated based on their specific goals and purposes.

Despite decades of experience with participatory decision making and emerging mandates to evaluate participation (e.g., on the part of the Environmental Protection Agency [EPA]), progress in participation evaluation in planning is limited. Unlike the fields of policy and program evaluation, and more recent works in conflict resolution,[1] the evaluation of participation in planning emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s and has not coalesced around agreed on principles or methods. In 1983, Rosener noted that the field had "no widely held criteria for judging success and failure; there are no agreed-upon evaluation methods" (p. 45). Fifteen years later, Beierle noted that the state of evaluation had not progressed (1998).

In addition to a lack of method, there are more general economic and sociopolitical barriers to evaluation in planning. The evaluation of participatory processes, but also of plans, and of their implementation and outcomes tends to be a missing element of planning practice. Planning agencies often lack the resources in time, staff, or expertise to support evaluation. Evaluation may not take place if planners and elected officials find it more rewarding to launch new programs than evaluate past activities. Organizational culture and political constraints can also limit the incentives to evaluate participation as evaluation can increase accountability and present political risks if it reveals inadequacies. Furthermore, evaluation entails that if failures or weaknesses are identified, change may be necessary, and change-averse organizations can thus see evaluation as

threatening. Lack of methods, of resources, and of political commitment to evaluation can therefore explain a reluctance evaluate participation (Baehler 2003; Shadish, Cook, and Levitzin 1991; Seasons 2003).

The few studies that evaluate participation rely on limited numbers of cases, with the exception of a few meta-analyses (Beierle and Cayford 2002; Lynn and Busenberg 1995).[2] The applied literature on public participation also lacks sound evaluations (NRC 1996; Raimond 2001) and public agencies do not systematically evaluate their participation programs. Theoretically driven studies, in contrast, tackle the difficulty of defining "success." User-based evaluations focus on participants' satisfaction with processes and outcomes (Rosener 1983). Theory-based evaluations assess participation against external goals, such as Beierle and Cayford's "social goals" of informing the public, incorporating public values in decisions, improving the quality of decisions, and increasing trust in institutions (Beierle 1998; Beierle and Cayford 2002). Webler (1995) emphasizes the goals of "fairness" and "competence" (Habermas 1987; Renn, Webler, and Wiedemann 1995). Innes and Booher (2002) focus on institutional capacity and resilience as the main criteria for evaluating collaborative processes. Laurian (2005) emphasizes the balance of exchanges between agencies and citizens and power sharing.

Expanding on Rosener's argument that participation formats should be selected based on the goals of participatory processes, evaluation criteria should also be derived from the goal(s) of each participatory process. The typology of evaluation criteria presented in Table 1 builds on the literature on the goals of participation. We distinguish between process-based goals, outcome-based goals, and user-based goals. Process-based goals include mutual learning (where participation seeks to increase public awareness of issues and agencies' awareness of public views) and the goal to promote democratic decision making (where participation seeks to promote the transparency, inclusiveness, and fairness of decision-making processes and to structure power-sharing between agencies and stakeholders). Outcome-based goals include issue-related goals (e.g., when participation is organized to meet statutory requirements, to find solutions, and to improve the quality of decisions by integrating public input), governance-related goals (when participation seeks to increase the legitimacy of agencies and decisions, to reduce conflicts, and to facilitate implementation), and social outcomes (when participation seeks to build institutional capacity, trust, social networks, or attend to the needs of disenfranchised groups). Finally, user-based goals focus on the satisfaction of participants and the general public, and other goals identified by participants.

Each of these criteria suggests a different perspective on what "successful" participation means. They are not mutually exclusive as participatory processes can seek to promote different goals simultaneously. In addition, stakeholders may pursue different objectives that translate into different evaluation criteria. Arnstein's citizen-oriented set of evaluation criteria emphasizes power sharing (1969). Government officials may strive to meet regulatory requirements or foster support for implementation. Lay citizens may seek information and attention to their concerns. Mobilized groups may attempt to shape the outcomes of the process. Participation can thus be seen by different parties as a threat or an opportunity, a legal obligation or a bundle of democratic rights. These different expectations and experiences condition the criteria stakeholders may adopt to evaluate participation.

▶ Research Objectives, Method, and Data

Research Objectives

To facilitate and promote sound evaluations of participation, the planning profession needs to develop, compare, and diffuse evaluation criteria and methodologies that reflect advances in both planning theory and practice. It is thus essential that we understand the state of practice, i.e., that we know how commonly and how participation is evaluated. This will allow us to assess the diffusion of participation evaluation in planning, to identify and fill potential gaps between the evaluation criteria suggested by planning theory and those used in practice, and, pragmatically, to propose evaluation methodologies that build not only on theory, but also on practical and tested methods currently in use.

The literature on participation evaluation does not address practitioners' evaluations of participation, the factors that may promote evaluation, or how frequently why and how planners evaluate participation. This article thus does not formally test hypotheses about the matter, but rather explores relevant research questions to provide a broad description of participation evaluation in planning practice across the United States.

We first seek to determine how commonly practitioners evaluate participation. We investigate whether evaluation is more likely for certain types of participatory mechanisms, planning projects, agencies, and communities, and whether planners' professional experience increases the likelihood that they evaluate participation. Second, where participation is formally evaluated, we seek to identify the focus of the evaluation, the motivations driving the evaluation, the evaluators (planning staff, consultants), and how systematically they evaluate participatory processes. Third, since evaluations may be informal, we seek to identify general criteria practitioners use to form their professional judgments about participatory mechanisms. We also seek to assess to what degree these criteria coincide with those suggested by the planning literature on participation (in table 1). Lastly, we seek to describe the evaluation methods used by planners who evaluate participation regularly and learn from their informed recommendations

Table 1.
Goals of participation and evaluation criteria.

Goals of Participation	*Evaluation Criteria*
Process-Based Goals	
Mutual Learning	
Increase public awareness	Participants and general public are informed about issue, stakes, and decision-making processes.
Increase agency awareness of public views	Agency is aware of public views, concerns, and preferences.
Democratic Process	
Transparency	Public understands decision-making process. Information about issues and process is available.
Inclusiveness	Broad attendance. All stakeholders and views are given standing, expressed, heard, respected, and considered.
Fairness and power sharing	Fair ground rules, decision making, solutions, and implementation. No dominating group. Shared decision-making power (e.g., through binding agreements). How process fares on Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation.
Outcome-Based Goals	
Issue-Related Outcomes	
Meet statutory requirements	Requirements met.
Find solution, reach consensus	Acceptable solution found.
Improve quality of decision	Decision integrates broad knowledge base and public input.
Governance Outcomes	
Increase legitimacy of agency	Agency and officials seen as legitimate by participants and general public.
Increase legitimacy, acceptability of decisions	Assessment of implementation, level of opposition/ acceptance of decision.
Avoid or mitigate conflict	Presence/absence and degree of conflict.
Facilitate implementation of solution	Solution implemented.
Social Outcomes	
Build institutional capacity, resilience	Community capacity to participate and act in the future.
Increase trust in planning agencies	Agency seen as responsive to public input, committed, and capable to implement decisions.
Build social networks, mutual understanding among participants, social capital, sense of citizenship	Participants feel included in governance, build trust and lasting relationships (among themselves and with administrators), understand and are committed to the public good identified.
Improve outcomes for most disenfranchised	Distribution of the costs and benefits of outcomes.
User-Based Goals	
Participants satisfied	Overall satisfaction, satisfaction with process and outcomes.
Other goals defined by participants	Criteria depend on participants' goals.

Method and Data

We report on data collected through a two-step national survey of members the AICP practicing in the United States in the public and private sectors. To obtain AICP certification, planners need to be members of the American Planning Association (APA), engaged in planning practice for a minimum of two years (depending on their degree), to pass an examination about substantive planning areas, and adhere to a code of ethics that includes a commitment to public participation. About 37 percent of the forty-one thousand APA members are AICP certified (APA 2006).

We surveyed AICP planners to focus the study on trained and experienced professionals who have observed or organized participatory processes and to avoid surveying students, planners with less than two years of experience, and planning commissioners. As such, the study did not include all APA members or professionals holding planning degrees, those working in planning, or the perspectives of community groups. While these segments of the planning community are valued, our aim was to target those more likely to be responsible for organizing participation processes.

The survey was conducted online in November of 2005 and March of 2007. First, a random sample of 2,390 AICP members was contacted by e-mail. A total of 761 planners responded to the survey, yielding a response rate of 32 percent. Respondents involved in participatory activities during the twelve months preceding the survey answered a series of questions about these processes and their evaluation. Second, we followed-up with the 9 percent of planners who reported that they regularly (i.e., "always" or "most of the time") evaluate participation. The objective was to collect detailed information about their evaluation methods and practices with open-ended questions. Since the survey was anonymous, we could only reach respondents who had agreed to provide their contact information. We sought to contact fifty-nine planners and twenty-four answered, yielding a response rate of 41 percent.

For the first part of the survey, we acknowledged that each participation process is unique. We did not expect respondents to provide a contextual evaluation criteria or to evaluate a participatory process while answering the survey. Rather, we contextualized the questions by asking about the evaluation of specific processes. We asked planners to (1) select and describe a project with a participatory element, (2) select a participatory mechanism used for this project (if several were used), and (3) describe how it was evaluated.

To provide a selection criterion, we asked planners to select a project with a "successful" participation process (in their opinion) that occurred in the twelve months prior to the survey. This focused the survey on processes recent and salient in respondents' memories, and thus for which they could describe formal and informal evaluations.[3] Respondents described the project, its topic area (e.g., transportation, land use, housing), the level at which it took place (e.g., state, city, neighborhood), the sizes and types of communities affected by the project (rural, urban, suburban). We collected information about all participation methods used (e.g., public hearings, meetings, workshops, taskforces). Since many projects involved more than one mechanism, constraints on survey length required that respondents focus on the evaluation of only one method. We asked respondents to select the approach they deemed "most influential" on the outcome of the project (e.g., a public meeting, a taskforce). This maximized the likelihood that respondents would describe processes they had reflected on. All questions about evaluations referred to this particular process.

We asked planners whether they formally or informally evaluated the processes and investigated the focus of the evaluation (processes, outcomes, and participant satisfaction), motivations for evaluating participation, as well as the frequency of, and responsibilities for, conducting evaluations. A combination of open and close-ended questions was used. Close-ended questions were used to determine what type of agency respondents work for (e.g., city, county, regional, or state planning agencies), the kind of projects described (e.g., transportation, land use, housing project), the size of the population affected by the project (less than ten thousand, ten thousand to twenty-five thousand, etc.), the participation mechanisms used (i.e., public hearings, meetings, workshops or charettes, task force or citizen advisory group, or others), whether the project had been evaluated and by who (e.g., the respondent, another person on staff, a consultant), how often agencies evaluate participation processes (always, most of the time, some of the time, rarely, or never), and the approximate number of years the respondent has been AICP-certified (i.e., less than five, five to ten, ten to fifteen, more than fifteen years). An open-ended question asked respondents to describe the project. Questions concerning evaluation criteria used lists of options (e.g., level of participant satisfaction, evidence of increased understanding, consensus reached, evidence of increased trust among stakeholders) and included an "other" option where respondents could write in additional criteria.

In contrast, the follow-up with planners who consistently evaluate participation included a few close-ended questions about their planning practice and experience, and mainly of open-ended questions on their rationale, criteria, and methods to evaluate participation, their recommendations about the best ways to evaluate participation, as well as the impact of evaluations on their practice. These questions included "How do you evaluate participation? Please describe this evaluation method and the evaluation instruments you use" and "What criteria do you use to determine whether participation is successful?"

The Sample

The sample is geographically representative of AICP-certified planners practicing throughout the nation (figure 1). Of all 761 respondents, about two-thirds work in government agencies and one-third for private agencies. (Among the twenty-four who evaluate participation often, eighteen work for the public sector and six in the private sector.) About a third of all respondents work in city planning departments, 13 percent work at the county level, and 1 percent to 5 percent at the regional, state, and federal levels and for nonprofit and
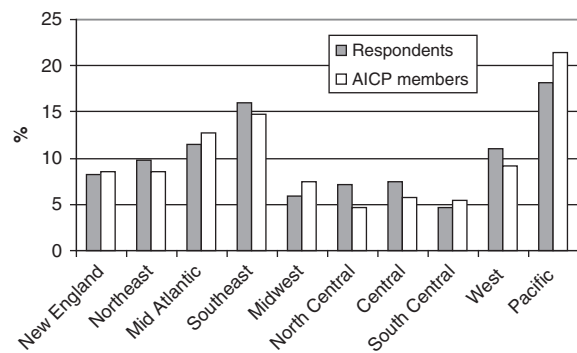
Figure 1. *Regional distribution of all AICP planners and survey respondents.*

educational institutions. Very few work in the nonprofit sector, possibly because planners in nonprofit or community organizations are less often AICP-certified than public or private sector planners.

Respondents take on a wide range of responsibilities, from comprehensive planning, transportation, infrastructure planning, and code development to environmental planning, historic preservation, land use and code enforcement, hazard mitigation, parks and recreation, and housing.

► Findings

To provide the context in which evaluations are described, we first present the planning projects described, selected traits of the communities involved and the participatory methods used. Second, we present the extent to which participation is formally and informally evaluated, as well as the purpose, frequency, responsibilities and criteria for evaluation. Third, drawing from the follow-up with the planners who consistently evaluate participation, we present their evaluation methods and recommendations.

Context: Projects and Participation Methods Described

The 761 respondents described the evaluation of participation processes in a wide range of planning contexts that reflect the diversity of planning practice (table 2). About a quarter each described participatory processes in land use and transportation projects. Others described participation processes related to the passage of new ordinances (14 percent), housing projects (10 percent), economic development (8 percent), community development (5 percent), and environmental planning (5 percent). Most of these projects have local impacts: about two-thirds have neighborhood- or city-level impacts and another fifth have regional impacts. These projects affect suburban (40 percent), urban (34 percent), and rural (16 percent) communities and the populations affected range from communities with less than ten thousand people (30 percent) to cities or regions of over five hundred thousand (11 percent).

Detailed responses to an open-ended question about the projects described revealed that they vary from fourteen- to one-thousand-mile-long corridors, from permitting 130,000 to 5.2 million square-foot commercial centers, from eight to fourteen thousand dwelling units, and from redeveloping five to ninety-three thousand acres. Examples include: developing a regional plan, a city comprehensive plan, zoning regulations, preparing neighborhood revitalization plans, developing mixed-use projects, planning for habitat protection and restoration and watershed management, planning major investments in transit systems, and implementing bicycle/pedestrian plans.

Planners used multiple participatory methods for these projects (figure 2). Three-quarters organized public meetings, 61 percent public hearings, 57 percent workshops or charettes, and 48 percent taskforces or advisory groups. Another 10 percent of respondents also used other methods, such as surveys and focus groups. Almost all (90 percent)

Table 2.
Types of projects, extent of impact, and population affected (estimated by respondents).

Type of Project	(%)	Extent of Impact	(%)	Affected Population	(%)
Land use	24.0	Neighborhood	31.6	Less than 10,000	30.4
Transportation	21.1	Citywide	35.7	—	—
Ordinance	13.5	Countywide	6.4	10,000 to 24,999	19.3
Housing	9.6	Regional	19.9	—	—
Economic development	8.4	Statewide	2.3	25,000 to 99,999	25.1
Community facilities	5.3	Multistate	0.3	—	—
Environmental	4.6	National	2.6	100,000 to 499,999	14.6
Other	13.5	Other	1.2	500,000 or more	10.5
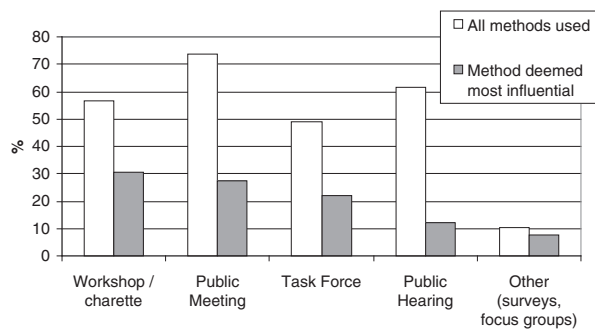
Figure 2. *All participation methods used and methods deemed most influential by respondents.*

Figure 3. *Percentage of respondents formally evaluating participatory processes.*

implemented more than one method, 46 percent used two or three, and 29 percent used four or more. In particular, hearings are almost always used in conjunction with other methods (95 percent of respondents who conducted hearings also used other participatory mechanisms).

When asked about the participation methods they deemed most influential (if several were used), a third identified workshops, perhaps because workshops provide small-group, open, and flexible settings where different views can be expressed and where dialogue and mutual learning can occur. Public meetings and taskforce/advisory groups were each deemed most influential by about a quarter of respondents. Hearings, in contrast, were least likely to be selected, most likely because they are limited to providing information to the public and gathering public comments in a nondeliberative fashion. Hearings do not provide for public dialogue and citizens are often frustrated by the lack of meaningful exchange and debate they allow.

Participation Evaluation: Frequency, Focus, Rationales, and Criteria

This section discusses how commonly and when all 761 respondents evaluate participation. Where participation is formally evaluated (i.e., using surveys, questionnaires, or checklists reflecting specific criteria, as opposed to planners' opinion or judgment), we identify the focus, motivation, and responsibilities for the evaluation, and how systematically planners conduct evaluations. Finally, we identify evaluation criteria for the whole sample and the sub-sample of planners who regularly evaluate participation.

How Often and When Is Participation Formally Evaluated?

One-quarter of respondents report formally evaluating the processes they described. An additional 10 percent
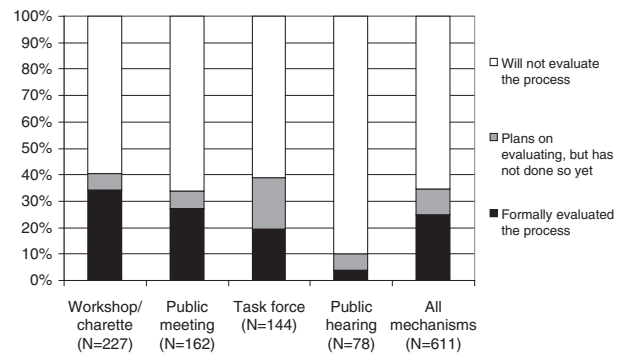
indicate that they plan on evaluating ongoing processes at a later point. Thus, two-thirds of planners *have not and will not* evaluate the participatory processes described (figure 3). Given the importance of evaluation for improving practice, the frequency of evaluation appears to be low.

The propensity to evaluate participation varies significantly across mechanisms ($\chi^2 = 41$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.000$). One-third of workshops, one-quarter of public meetings, one-fifth of taskforces, and only 4 percent of public hearings are evaluated.[4] For one respondent, participation is generally evaluated "when we go to litigation." Among those describing taskforces, one-fifth plan to conduct evaluations in the future but have not because the taskforce is ongoing. The lack of evaluation of hearings is particularly striking given how commonly used and how commonly criticized they are. In sum, half the workshops, taskforces, and public meetings and 90 percent of hearings are *not* evaluated. This may be because of constraints on planning staff resources, time, or expertise, to a focus on future work rather than past activities, or to a lack of institutional commitment to evaluation—perhaps because it presents political risks or might reveal that improvements are necessary.

There are significant differences in the use of formal evaluations by type of project ($\chi^2 = 17$, $df = 7$, $p = 0.015$). Planners formally evaluate participation for 29 percent to 30 percent of transportation, land use, and environmental projects and for 24 percent of community and economic development projects, but only for 13 percent and 15 percent of housing and ordinance projects, respectively. Evaluations of participation for ordinance projects may be rare because public approval for ordinances is assessed through the electoral process. Housing projects may gather less public interest or be less contentious than transportation, land use/environmental and community and economic development projects that tend to have wider ranging impacts.

The frequency of formal evaluations also varies with the size of the community affected, ranked in five categories from fewer than ten thousand residents to more than five hundred

Table 3.
Focus and purpose of evaluation.*

	Workshop(%)	Public Meeting(%)	Taskforce (%)	Public Hearing (%)	All mechanisms (N)(%)
Focus of Evaluation					
Participants' satisfaction (surveys)	25.9	7.0	13.0	28.6	17.1
Assessment of process	34.6	56.1	53.7	28.6	45.7
Assessment of outcomes	39.5	36.8	33.3	42.9	37.2
Reason for Evaluating Participation					
Improve ongoing process	42.5	38.1	27.3	71.4	38.2
Improve future processes	46.0	52.4	65.5	28.6	52.4
Assess impacts of process	11.5	9.5	7.3	0.0	9.4
Total (number of responses)	87	63	55	7	212

* Totals do not add to 100% because "other responses" are not included.

thousand ($\chi^2 = 11$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.061$). About 36 percent of participation mechanisms in communities larger than one hundred thousand are evaluated, versus only 23 percent for communities under one hundred thousand. Planning staff in larger communities may have more resources (in time, funding, or capacity and expertise), may be more committed to evaluating participatory processes that require significant resources to organize, or be more motivated to evaluate participation to improve practice. Public scrutiny or demand for transparency may also be greater in larger communities.

Finally, experienced planners are the most likely to evaluate participation. About 32 percent of planners certified for more than ten years have formally evaluated participation, versus only 23 percent of planners certified for less than ten years ($\chi^2 = 5.6$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.017$). More experienced planners may place greater value on the evaluation of planning activities—to improve practice, promote the accountability of their agency, or deflect potential criticisms about the process. They may also have had time to develop methods to evaluate participation, or be less overwhelmed with organizing participatory processes and have more time and energy to devote to evaluation. In sum, formal evaluations are most common in large urban areas; for workshops and public meetings; for transportation, land use, and environmental issues; and for projects led by experienced planners.

Criteria, Motivations, Responsibilities, and Systematization of Evaluations

Table 3 presents the general criteria used and planners' motivations for evaluating participation. About 46 percent of formal evaluations focus on assessing processes, 37 percent on assessing outcomes, and 17 percent on assessing participants' satisfaction (see below for more details on evaluation criteria used in informal evaluations and by planners who regularly evaluate participation). Evaluation criteria vary across participatory mechanisms. When evaluated, one-quarter of workshops and hearings are evaluated based on participants' satisfaction (e.g., through surveys) as opposed to only 7 percent and 13 percent of public meetings and taskforces. However, given the limited sample size (212 respondents answered these questions), these differences are only marginally significant ($\chi^2 = 13.3$, $df = 6$, $p = 0.04$).

Most planners who formally evaluate participatory processes seek to improve future and ongoing processes (52.4 percent and 38.2 percent, respectively). This is consistent with the rational-adaptive planning model and the notion that evaluation is important to improve practice. Very few (9.4 percent) evaluate participation to assess the impacts of participation on planning decisions. Similarly, most of the twenty-four respondents who evaluate participation consistently (in the follow-up survey) report that their main objective is to improve ongoing and future participatory processes (eleven and nine of nineteen, respectively). Other motivations for evaluating participation include: to give participants, planning staff, commissioners, and Board members an assessment of the outcome of the participation process, and being prepared for the scrutiny of local media by ensuring that processes are democratic.

Table 4 presents the responsibilities for formal evaluations in the public sector (to assess reliance on consultants) and the frequency of evaluations in the private and public sectors combined. In the public sector, most evaluations are conducted by planning staff. Consultants are hired by agencies to conduct evaluations for 11 percent of the evaluations described, and are more likely to evaluate workshops than other events ($\chi^2 = 20.734$; $df = 9$; $p = 0.014$). Consultants may be more frequently hired to conduct workshops, have sufficient time and resources to build evaluation into the process,

Table 4.
Responsibilities for evaluation and frequency of evaluation.

	Workshop (%)	Public Meeting (%)	Taskforce (%)	Public Hearing (%)	All mechanisms (N) (%)
Responsibilities for Evaluation					
Survey respondent	27.3	20.6	19.4	12.5	22.7
Other planning staff	15.2	35.3	20.9	50.0	23.6
Consultant	14.1	7.4	10.4	0	10.7
Other (e.g., committee)	43.4	36.8	49.3	37.5	43.0
Frequency of Evaluation, Public					
and Private Sectors					
Always	36.4	17.61	17.9	12.5	25.2
Most of the time	36.4	29.4	26.9	0.0	30.1
Some of the time	20.2	29.4	34.3	37.5	26.8
Rarely or never	7.1	23.6	20.9	50.0	15.8
Total number of responses	99	68	67	8	242

or may need to show accountability for their work. Open-ended questions revealed that taskforces are more often evaluated by internal subcommittees, explaining the high proportion of "other" responses to this question.

Of all 761 respondents, sixty-six (9 percent) formally evaluate participation "always" or "most of the time." Even for the 242 planners (25 percent) who evaluated participation or planned to, formal evaluations are still relatively haphazard. One-fourth "always" evaluate participation, 30 percent evaluate it "most of the time," and 43 percent only "some of the time" or "rarely." The frequency of evaluation varies significantly across participatory mechanisms (χ^2 = 36.797 df = 12; p = 0.000). Workshops are the most likely to be systematically evaluated (73 percent of planners evaluate them "always" or "most of the time"), perhaps because they typically involve small group, rely heavily on participants' contributions, and provide sufficient time for evaluation. In contrast, a majority of planners who evaluated public meetings and taskforces evaluate them only "some of the time" or "rarely." Public meetings tend to involve many stakeholders and be complex to organize and long, leaving planning staff and participants little time for evaluation. Task forces engage a smaller number of participants over long periods of time, and may be informally evaluated over time within each task force.

The frequency of evaluations also varies across agencies, type of project, and planners' experience (see figure 4, which includes only respondents who evaluated the participation process they describe). When they evaluate participation, private and nonprofit sector planners do so more systematically than public sector planners. Private and nonprofit sector planners may have more time and resources to conduct evaluations, or their work may be subject to more scrutiny and accountability by clients or donors.
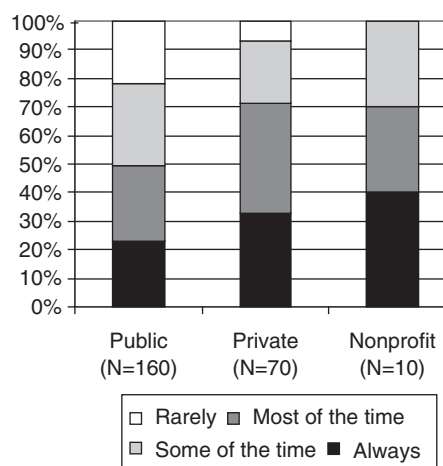

Figure 4. *Frequency of evaluation by type of agency (only respondents who evaluated participation).**

There are some differences in the frequency of evaluation by type of project. Community development and land-use projects are most commonly evaluated (respectively 64 percent and 61 percent of respondents who described them evaluate them "always" or "almost always," versus 55 percent of all projects), perhaps because they tend to be contentious. Ordinances and environmental planning projects are least likely to be systematically evaluated (about 29 percent of respondents who evaluated them rarely do so, versus 16 percent for all projects)—in the case of ordinances, it may be because public opinion ultimately expresses itself through the polls.

Finally, planners who have been AICP certified for more than ten years are more likely to evaluate participation "always" or "most of the time" (63 percent) than those certified for less than ten years (51 percent). Accordingly, of the

Table 5.
Criteria used by respondents to informally assess the success of participation.*

	Workshop (%)	Public Meeting (%)	Taskforce Meeting (%)	Public Hearing (%)	All mechanisms (N) (%)
Increased understanding	23.3	28.1	22.0	22.3	24.1
Consensus reached/arrival at decision	17.1	11.4	26.7	26.3	19.0
Participant satisfaction	16.4	19.0	12.7	14.9	16.0
Increased trust among participants	16.4	17.4	16.1	8.9	15.6
Solution identified is workable, can be implemented	13.8	10.4	15.8	10.9	13.0
Attendance	7.6	7.4	3.4	6.4	6.4
Smooth process, little conflict	5.5	6.3	3.4	10.4	5.9
Number of responses	202	181	145	79	607

*Only criteria mentioned by more than 5% of the respondents are included. Totals add up to more than 100% because respondent could select multiple answers.

twenty-four planners who evaluate participation consistently, two-thirds are forty-five years old and older and one-half have been AICP certified for more than ten years. Experienced planners are thus not only more likely to evaluate participation, but also more likely to do so systematically, maybe because they have higher capacity and/or commitment to evaluating participation than less experienced planners.

Evaluation Criteria

Since few planners conduct formal evaluations, the 761 respondents were asked about the informal criteria they use to form their professional judgments about participation processes. We distinguished between criteria used to determine whether they are *satisfied* with the process and criteria used to assess its *success*. The list of criteria proposed was derived from table 1 and focus on the participation process, outcomes and participants' satisfaction.

Attendance is key to planners' satisfaction (it is identified as a criterion by a third of respondents for public hearings and by 41 percent to 47 percent for other participatory mechanisms). The criteria used to informally assess the *success* of participation, however, are richer and focus on participation processes as well as issue-related and social outcomes (table 5). Increased participants' understanding of planning issues is mentioned by one-fourth of all planners. Reaching consensus or making a decision is the second most important factor, mentioned by one-fifth of respondents. Participants' satisfaction and increased trust were each mentioned by 16 percent of respondents and identifying a solution that is workable, i.e., that can be implemented, was mentioned by 13 percent. Attendance and avoiding conflicts are not important criteria, mentioned by only 6 percent of respondents. All other criteria were mentioned by fewer than 5 percent of respondents.

The criteria used vary slightly across participation mechanisms. Increasing participants' understanding of issues is slightly more important for public meetings, perhaps because they tend to favor one-way communication flows whereby agencies inform the public over receiving public input, which only occurs in a nondeliberative fashion. Reaching consensus or decisions is most often used to assess the success of taskforces, perhaps because they are given specific missions and sufficient time and expertise, and are expected to yield decisions. Trust-building is rarely mentioned as a criterion for assessing hearings (which do not seek to improve agency–public relationships). Avoiding conflicts, on the other hand, is seen as a more important criterion for assessing the success of hearings than other mechanisms, perhaps because they are very formal processes that leave little room for debate and conflict management may become a relevant criterion for evaluation when frustrated citizens attend hearings to express discontent. Reaching consensus or decisions is mentioned by one-quarter of respondents as a criterion for assessing the success of hearings, perhaps because they are used to finalizing decisions and meet regulatory requirements to complete participatory processes.

The twenty-four planners who often evaluate participation reported using more specific evaluation criteria. They ranked the following as "somewhat" to "most" important: (1) in terms of process: that the agency hears public views, that participants learn about issues and feel respected, as well as the transparency and inclusiveness of the process and the absence of a dominant group; (2) in terms of outcomes: that a consensus is reached and that decisions are of better quality and more legitimate. One-fifth mention attendance as important, while another fifth specifically state that it is not. The criteria *not* seen as important are: that workable solution are found, that conflicts are avoided, and, surprisingly, that there are increased social networks and social capital or trust between

participants and in the agency. Overall, the criteria used by all 761 planners and by the twenty-four "evaluators" thus emphasize citizens' learning, reaching consensus, and participant satisfaction. Yet, they do not cover the full range of criteria derived from the literature, such as increasing the legitimacy of the planning agency or its decisions, facilitating implementation, increasing community and institutional capacity, or the degree of power sharing in the decision-making process.

▶ **Practitioners' Evaluation Methods and Recommendations**

The twenty-four planners who often evaluate participation and answered the follow-up survey are the most knowledgeable about evaluation. Twenty report evaluating participation themselves and, of those who use structured or semi-structured methods, most developed the evaluation tools themselves and have used it for at least ten years. Eight report that evaluating participation has improved the way they conduct participation. For instance, they devised new strategies and changed ways to present information (e.g., with more reliance on PowerPoint presentations), changed the notification process, and changed meeting formats (toward shorter public meetings and shorter presentations). This section describes the methods they use and their recommendations.

Evaluation Methods

To evaluate participation, sixteen seek input from participants, twelve from staff and community leaders, and eight from consultants. All obtain participants' input *directly* (twenty of twenty-four gather feedback through informal discussions). A few (four) use tools such as checklist or benchmarks, but they generally do not use standardized methods (only one does and four use partially standardized methods, such as standard survey questions). Twelve use ad-hoc surveys (most with a combination of open and close-ended questions), twelve use face-to-face interviews with participants, ten use public or group discussions, eight use checklists for staff members, and six use checklists for participants.

Informal evaluation methods, used by most respondents, are based on observations, anecdotal comments and discussions with staff about the level of attendance and the quality of the process, informal conversations with participants and group discussions, as well as, for one respondent, paying attention to media coverage of the event to verify that information is correctly publicized. The more systematized methods used by respondents are both quantitative and qualitative. They fall under four categories:

> Surveys of participants following meetings and events. Some use surveys with close-ended questions (one respondent emphasized the importance of using *only* close-ended questions), or with a combination of standardized and open-ended questions that vary from project to project. Most respondents who use surveys noted the importance of keeping the questionnaires very short (e.g., about four to six questions on an "agree–disagree" scale and a maximum of two to four open-ended questions).

> Analyses of public comments expressed in comment cards, e-mails, letters, or verbally. Comments are counted, categorized, analyzed, and compiled into databases or included in meeting minutes or project files (a respondent noted the importance of noting both the quality and quantity of comments).

> Analysis of attendance. The number of participants at meetings is collected through sign-in sheets and lists of speakers. One respondent reported observing the length of stay of participants at meetings and another systematically analyzing various sources of information on attendance.

> One respondent uses the qualitative evaluation method provided by the *Technology of Participation* (Spencer 1989). He uses a "custom design set of participation evaluation questions primarily based on the Focused Conversation Method." This "focused conversation" approach engages participants in four steps of a critical thinking and discussion process whereby respondents reflect and answer a series of open-ended questions on facts, emotions, values, meanings and purposes, and on the decisions reached.

Recommendations

These twenty-four respondents answered an open-ended question about their recommendations on the best ways to evaluate participation. Their recommendations can be grouped under six topics. First, they state that participants should be the center of any evaluation of participation. Second, "one size doesn't fit all" and evaluation criteria and methods should be developed for each process based on its objectives. Third, the evaluation of processes and outcomes should be explicitly separated. Processes can be evaluated based on attendance, noting who did most of the talking, how many comments were received, and by assessing the quality of participation, trust, and transparency. The evaluation of outcomes can focus on the *content* of the comments and exchanges, on the impact of the process on agency decisions, and on the social outcomes of the process (e.g., what agency members and participants achieved). Fourth, both informal and formal evaluation tools should be used. Informal methods include observations and group and one-on-one discussions. Formal methods include focus groups and survey questionnaires, which should be concise and provide more multiple-choice questions than open-ended ones. Fifth, planners should pay attention to local media coverage to verify that the information was conveyed correctly and clearly, and that the process is recognized as democratic. Finally, evaluation instruments should avoid eliciting only positive responses but also allow negative views to be expressed (while managing public expectations by ensuring that the agency has the ability to respond to the feedback received).

▶ Summary, Caveats, and Implications for Planning

Planning theory emphasizes the importance of participation for democratic decision making. Yet, in the absence of evaluation, researchers and practitioners cannot determine what participatory mechanisms are best adapted to different circumstances or identify the causes of success or failure of processes. Evaluating participation is also necessary to improve planning practice over time. While a few in-depth analyses and evaluations have identified barriers to meaningful participation, planning research and practice still lack procedures to evaluate participation. To provide a general framework for assessing evaluation, we propose a typology of theory-driven evaluation criteria. These criteria are derived from the multiple possible goals of participation. They include (1) process-based goals such as mutual learning and strengthening democratic processes; (2) outcome-based goals such as finding solutions, improving governance (e.g., the legitimacy of institutions and decisions, implementation of decisions), and social outcomes (e.g., enhancing trust, social networks, and capital); and (3) user-based goals such as participants' satisfaction of other goals defined by participants.

We believe that planning scholarship and practice can jointly contribute to efforts to develop participation evaluation. To further this goal, this study provides a first broad overview of participation evaluation in practice. It sought to identify how often, when, and how public participation is evaluated by AICP planning practitioners.

It reveals that participation evaluation is still uncommon in practice: two-thirds of the participatory processes described by the 761 respondents were not evaluated and fewer than 10 percent of planners consistently evaluate participation. We found that the propensity to evaluate participation varies (1) by type of participatory mechanisms—workshops are more often evaluated; (2) by type of project—participation in housing and ordinance projects is less often evaluated than in environmental, community, and economic development projects; (3) by size of community—participation is more often evaluated in large communities; and (4) with planners' level of experience—more experienced planners are more likely to conduct evaluations.

While their personal satisfaction with participation is mainly based on attendance at meetings, planners draw on a much richer set of criteria to assess whether participation is successful. The main criteria used to informally and formally evaluate participation are: (1) in terms of process-based criteria: that the process is transparent and inclusive, that participants understand issues and feel respected, and that the agency hears public input; (2) in terms of outcomes-based criteria: that solutions are found, that decisions are of high quality and legitimate, and that trust is fostered; and (3) in terms of user-based criteria: that participants are satisfied.

Planning practitioners thus identify evaluation criteria largely, although not entirely, consistent with those identified by theorists. Theorists' and practitioners' views of participation are complex and go beyond merely meeting statutory requirements, attendance, or avoiding conflicts. They are concerned with more than immediate planning outcomes, emphasizing social learning and building consensus and trust. Yet, gaps between theory and practice were observed. Some evaluation criteria identified in the planning literature are not used by practitioners, such as the impact of participation on the legitimacy of agencies and their decisions, on the implementation of decisions, on local institutional and community capacity and resilience, and on planning outcomes for the most disenfranchised. In addition, while practitioners evaluate the inclusiveness of the process through attendance, they do not consider whether attendants are given equal voice or standing, or whether they are heard or respected. More surprisingly, they do not mention criteria related to the degree of fairness and power sharing of the process, i.e., how participatory processes fare on Arnstein's well-known ladder of citizen participation.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

This survey provides a national picture of participation evaluation in planning practice. It is significant that, within two days, one-third of all AICP-certified planners contacted responded to the survey, and that respondents to the follow-up survey provided lengthy comments to many open-ended questions. This indicates planners' interest in the topic and in learning about other planners' practices.

The study population is comprised of AICP-certified planners. It is possible that the AICP code of ethics influences respondents' views on participation, which would steer the results toward higher concerns for participation than non-AICP planners may display. The study population also does not seek to represent all members of the APA, lay participants, or advocacy groups involved in planning. These stakeholders may hold very different views of what successful participation entails and of appropriate evaluation criteria and methodologies.

In the first part of the survey, given the importance of asking about participation evaluation in specific planning contexts and given constraints on survey lengths, it was not feasible to obtain information about the evaluation of multiple projects or multiple participatory mechanisms. We chose to focus on one project (with a successful participation component) and one participation method (influential on the planning outcome). No data was collected about the evaluations of failed and noninfluential processes. Yet, given the propensity of professions to study and document successes rather than failures, we believe that it provides a conservative estimate of the frequency of evaluations. In addition, we did

not ask respondents to indicate the goals of the processes they described. Since the survey took place a few months to a year after the process, respondents may have reconstructed or reinterpreted the original goals of the process rather than recollect them. This study thus could not assess whether and to what degree evaluation criteria are selected based on the goals of each process.

This research, in addition, suffers from caveats common to all quantitative studies. Most questions in the first part of the survey were close-ended and can only provide a snapshot of participation evaluation in practice. The follow-up survey targeting planners who are particularly knowledgeable about participation evaluation included open-ended questions and provides more in-depth information about their practice.

Implications

For future research on participation evaluation, case studies will be better suited than surveys to answer specific questions about the evaluation of participation. First, participatory processes are driven by different sets of goals (which can differ for planners' and participants' perspectives) and future studies could record the goals of participation from planners and participants at outset of the process (and track possible goal changes) to assess whether and how evaluations criteria and methods reflect these goals. For instance, if participation is organized to improve the legitimacy of decisions and facilitate implementation, are these items specifically evaluated? Second, only case studies can provide in-depth information about *how* evaluations of participation unfold, whether they shape participation as it occurs or is used as a post-hoc assessment, and whether evaluation results are disseminated to the public. Third, case studies can also show whether and how evaluation results are used to identify the causes of successes or failures, improve practice, or yield other benefits, such as increasing planners' commitment to participation or building institutional capacity.

The implications of our findings for practice are that evaluation has not yet become an integral part of participatory processes. Formal evaluations are still uncommon, and planners have not developed or tested evaluation methods to assess their effort to involve citizens, address the persisting barriers to participation, or compare participation processes or outcomes across mechanisms or projects or with the practices of other agencies.

With the exception of planners who have developed an expertise in participation evaluation, most tend to focus on processes and participants' satisfaction rather than assess the outcomes of participation. More attention needs to be paid to the impacts of participation, i.e., to empirically assessing whether and how participation influences planning decisions, implementation, and outcomes, including governance and social outcomes such as increased legitimacy of planning

agencies, social learning or social network, community empowerment or capacity building.

The criteria used by practitioners to assess participation success are a subset of those suggested by theoretical works and include processes, issue-related, governance, and social outcomes, a well as user-based goals. This suggests that experienced professional planners and planning theorists are generally in agreement about the key benefits of participation and could start collaborating to develop a set of evaluation criteria and methodologies building on these practice and theory-based evaluation criteria. However, some theory-derived criteria are not used in practice—in particular the effect of participation on the legitimacy of agencies, on implementation, on community capacity, or the degree of fairness and power sharing in participatory processes, perhaps because they are difficult to assess. In developing evaluation methodologies, planners will thus need to give particular attention to these criteria.

Evaluation methodologies designed to meet the needs of researchers and practitioners will also need to be both general and replicable to compare across processes, over time, or across agencies, and ad-hoc and adapted to local processes and needs. They could explicitly focus on participants, participation processes, and outcomes and include formal and informal evaluation approaches. For instance, evaluation methodologies could be composed of general and specialized modules to assess different goals of participation and goal-derived criteria drawn from what planning practitioners and theorists expect from participation. They could also include locally selected, user-based criteria to reflect local conditions and what planners *and participants* expect from participation in specific contexts.

Collaborative works involving academics and experienced practitioners could guide the development of evaluation methodologies. Many criteria have been identified in the literature and are conceptually organized in this study. Efforts to develop measurable criteria and evaluation methodologies could involve planners who have been AICP certified for more than ten years, who, we found, evaluate participation most frequently and planners who consistently evaluate participation.

In particular, the recommendations of planners with experience in participation evaluations suggest that evaluations should center on participants, that evaluation criteria and methods need to be adapted to each participatory process, that the process and outcomes of participation should be evaluated separately, that both formal (e.g., surveys) and informal evaluations (e.g., discussions with staff and participants) should be used, that planners should pay attention to media coverage, and that participants should be encouraged to express positive and negative views.

Finally, it will be necessary to identify and remove barriers to—and provide incentives for—evaluation. Since most evaluations in the public sector are conducted by planning staff,

planning curricula and continuing education programs need to increase current and future planners' awareness of the importance of evaluation, and to provide them evaluation tools and training. The lack of resources for evaluations is another barrier to evaluation. The costs of conducting evaluations (in terms of time, financial resources, staffing, and professional training) need to become integrated in the organization and budget of participatory projects. Finally, professional planning publications could showcase a few evaluations that improved planning practice and/or increased public support for participatory process to raise planners' awareness of the practical benefits of evaluation.

▶ Notes

1. The fields of policy, program, and plan evaluation have developed refined evaluation methodologies (e.g., Mazmanian and Sabatier 1983; Goggin et al. 1990; Baer 1997; Laurian et al. 2004a, 2004b). In the field of conflict resolution, O'Leary and Bingham (2003), d'Estree et al. (2001), and d'Estree and Colby (2003) discuss criteria for success, evaluation methods, and the use of evaluation for conflict resolution.

2. For the use of case studies in research on Citizens Advisory Committees, see Lynn and Busenberg (1995). Other examples of studies of participation based on limited numbers of case studies include Tauxe (1995); Moote, McClaran, and Chickering (1997); and Santos and Chess (2003).

3. The rationale for respondents' choice of project and participatory approach was not recorded because we did not seek to ask respondents to identify general criteria for success. While the questionnaire comprises seventy-seven questions, respondents answered a subset of about thirty, depending on the type of participatory process they identified as being the most influential on their project.

4. A logit regression analysis predicting whether or not participation is formally evaluated revealed that (1) public meetings, workshops, and taskforces are significantly more likely to be evaluated than hearings (the effect is the strongest for workshops and significant at the 0.001 level); (2) the larger the population affected by the project, the more likely participation is to be evaluated (significant at the 0.05 level); and (3) the length of time respondents have been AICP certified slightly increases the likelihood that participation is evaluated (significant only at the 0.15 level). Other potential factors, such as the type of project (e.g., land use, transportation, housing), the scale of the project (federal, state, city, neighborhood), its locale (urban, suburban, rural) and the type of agency (city, county, state, private sector) were not found to significantly affect whether participation is evaluated.

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