People Making Places

Episodes in Participation, 1964-1984

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OPERATION BOOTSTRAP

Introduction

        This book is a story of the 1960s and 70s, an extraordinary period in American

life. It documents enactments of a perennial national theme--participatory democracy.

The period is examined through four case studies, from 1964 to 1984, in which "ordinary" people on the periphery of power and authority collaborated to improve their life situations through the making of Places. These collaborative efforts were conducted under the ideological and/or strategic mantle of participatory democracy as the central norm directing group process or citizen participation as a demand made of those in control of power, resources, and authority.

The accounts tell what happened when these ordinary people came together, took up and acted upon the ideals of citizen participation renewed by the movements of the times. Described and explained is the process and outcome of people's efforts to make places containing and representing those ideals. The stories bring us into contemporary times and the question of the fate of these exemplary efforts for participation today.

The book was conceived in a bout of mild incredulity. Having been closely associated with the northern civil rights and adjunct movements, I was somewhat haunted by the fact that those times had so totally disappeared from me and others I knew who had been similarly involved. How could anything so active, promising, and, apparently, indelible have receded so thoroughly to mere memories and documents? I have held an ideological commitment to participation as a democratic value. Since 1960, all the social projects that have engaged me have been those that had, among other features, the possibility of testing and vindicating this value. Fortunately, for purposes of conducting various versions of sociological study, I have collected documentary material on all these projects and have widely interviewed the people involved. On many sharply defined occasions I worked in the role of participant observer, volunteer, consultant, evaluator, etc., in situations where people attempted to establish small worlds or restructure some aspect of them.

In this book I tell the stories of four of these situations, tracing the path of participation through those times, showing the process through which Places were created, and, perhaps, retrieving some narrow sense of that interesting period.

THE CASES

Among the social scientist's duties is the responsibility to say, in some organized way, what's going on in society, and to articulate useful generalities based on an analysis of those goings-on. In this book's four cases, much attention is paid to the first duty. Generalizations develop from comparisons between cases--those described here and elsewhere in the literature. Therefore, each is told as a story in which the complex web of belief, people, activity, etc. leads, over time, to the founding of something: a self-help job training center in riot-torn Southeast Los Angeles; an alternative school in Berkeley, California; a new school building and reconstructed curriculum in Oakland, California; a new park in San Francisco's Mission District. Each case is embedded in the larger issues and ideas abroad in the country at the time. To capture the sense of intensity, commitment, and urgency of the times, the voices of the actors are frequently allowed to speak the ideas on which their efforts were based.

OPERATION BOOTSTRAP

Operation Bootstrap was a self-help job training program precipitated out of the Congress of Racial Equality's strategy shift in 1964 from nonviolent direct action to community organizing.

Refusing federal funds, but situated in time and space to benefit from the public response to the Watts "riot," the Bootstrap leadership and followers organized a job training school, clothing store, and other smaller elements of a planned new black community to be reconstituted along sound economic and political lines stressing ethnic and community pride.

KILIMANJARO

The National Institute of Education funded several sites around the country to establish experimental schools within the legal boundaries of existing school districts. Extensive parent participation was mandated.

The story is about the way a group in the city of Berkeley, California, got and used Experimental Schools Program funding from the Berkeley Unified School District and struggled to make a school. Kilimanjaro Elementary School was self-consciously "alternative" in the critical meaning of that term as used in those times. Its constituent community could roughly be characterized as counter culture. Their task was to establish the site, curriculum, community--the full Place.

The case highlights the struggles of a city over the style, content, and conduct of its central institutions.

PERALTA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Peralta Elementary School had its origins in a bureaucratic passion for the appearance of participation and the fact   of state money available for legally required upgrading of earthquake unsafe schools. The Place made here is a new building, a new curriculum, and a new little educational world in north Oakland, California, conceived, pursued, and executed by an energetic group of parents. The school's right to continued existence was extracted from Superintendent Marcus Foster just prior to his assassination by the SLA.* The story is told from the perspective of a member of the design team selected by the school's site committee to

*Symbionese Liberation Army

translate their distinctive needs into a physical form that would facilitate and sustain them.

POTRERO DEL SOL: A Park for the People

For various reasons, several influential groups in San Francisco, California, compelled the city to buy four and a half acres in the Mission District for development as a park. Local sentiment and bureaucratic strings attached to state money borrowed for the purchase required extensive community participation in the park's conception and planning. The story, here from the perspective of a consultant hired to conduct the participatory process, is about a yearlong encounter in the complex social mosaic of the Mission District and the politically byzantine city.

CONCLUSIONS

Cases are compared in terms of introductory themes. Issues of success and failure are discussed in light of the participation literature.

Distinctive characteristics of the 1960s and early 70s are highlighted in relation to present and future prospects of participatory place-making.

THE AUDIENCE

The fundamental sociological questions concern the sources of social order and stability as well as the sources of reintegration and change. Our central mysteries are still rulefulness and emergence.

Once in the field setting, however, these questions cease to be matters of mere sociological curiosity. People working on their own behalf to reconstruct their physical, moral, or policy environments produce a kind of vortex that sucks in neutral interest and pushes it down toward action. The political environment of the 1960s and 70s heightened the effects of practical involvement on field investigators. Participant observation, while methodologically sensitive and appropriate to those times, was, because of those times, a very difficult human stance to maintain. For this reason,

along with my own career path, which moved inexorable toward applied sociology, the stories I have collected and the reports I give here make up a mixture of institutionalization as process, cookbook knowledge on architectural programming, facilitation of participation and social action, ideological analysis, stories of community conflict, and the like.

There is no literature, <u>per se</u>, on participatory place making. It is the retrospective creation of an applied sociologist who has spent 18 years teaching and working with architects and planners. The challenge associated with giving these accounts is one of making them compelling to a currently uncircumscribed audience of those concerned to return world-making more fully into the hands of ordinary people. There could be interesting things here for architects, planners, sociologists, public officials, school teachers and administrators.

THEMES AND APPROACH

PEOPLE

People work in concert to accomplish various ends. Among these ends is the creation of little worlds better suited to their ideals and needs than the worlds they find available to them. The four case studies in this book describe the social process of what I call "place-making"--a process guided by the ideal of democratic inclusion.

I look at the successes and failures of "ordinary" people in making places for the life they would like for themselves or those they care about. In all four cases over the twenty years covered, the most energetic people involved in these creations held an image, wide or narrow, of what the place would be like and what its creation would accomplish. By "ordinary," I mean that the main image-holders were not exceptional in relation to their notice, influence, or power. They had no unusual access, by way of birthright or social position, to the tools or resources normally associated with advantage.

It will be evident, however, from the stories told here, that each situation of place-making involved people who were extraordinary in their greater-than-usual idealism, energy, and leadership qualities, and in their ability to concentrate on the accomplishment of their goals.

PLACES

People know their locatedness in activity, value, and moral realms by who they are with, where they are physically, and what goes on there. After work, Al goes to Joe's Bar at 14th and Elm. That fact speaks more to Al and all who know and care that Al goes there than does the likelihood that Joe's Bar stands, sociologically, for "stable, working-class family man." Our environment is replete with named places that accomplish this kind of work. The names, even without clear geographical coordinates, excite pictures and attitudes among even the barely informed. Within such places people generally have a choice of smaller places and orbits that most reflect what the choosers are about in their subjective reckoning.

On occasion, some people become dissatisfied with the places available to them because those places do not offer what is needed to accomplish their preferred activities or identities. This book describes situations in which people decided to make their own places. I propose no elaborate conceptual specificity for the term "places,' and generally ignore the rapidly branching literature on the topic. Seymour Sarason's "settings" comes closest to what I am describing (1972). Here I will mean by a place a location with new or adapted buildings and grounds on which is developed a program of social activity reflecting the values of the people who create the place. It is a place and their place, designed--with hope--to help them and those they care about become more like what the makers envision.

PARTICIPATION

"Place" is in our dictionaries. Our experience of whatever it is merits a name for the thing. Students of the environment and social life have regarded "place" as important enough to require greater conceptual specificity than dictionaries offer.[1] Because that specificity is oblique to my concern, I note it and colonize my own appropriate meaning.

"Participate" is another word and another thing. Among the definitions in our dictionaries is "to take part." Among the definitions of "participation" is "the state of being related to a larger whole." But when you turn to the literature that describes and conceptualizes participation, it is vast.

Taking part in the larger whole of democratic political life of this country is an ideal nearly as old as the country. The quest is perennial and is continually reexamined. For purposes of this book, it is most relevant to discuss the renewed calls for participation in the 1960s that set the context of these case studies, to briefly describe the societal response and the analytic literature that evolved. The issues raised in this literature establish a foil against which the cases can, in conclusion, be examined.

Participation: Renewed Calls

In 1905, Upton Sinclair formed the International Socialist Society (ISS). Over the next sixty years, through schismatic transformation, often pitting radical college youth against their moderate elders, ISS produced the League for Industrial Democracy (LID), the Student League for Industrial Democracy (SLID), and, in January of 1960, the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Along the way, some of the most distinguished names in American political and literary history participated in these

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[1] Relph, 1976; Steel, 1981.

organizations. Some went on to write, interpret, or fight against New Deal, New

Frontier, and Great Society legislation and policy.[2]

In 1962, SDS sought, once and for all, to synthesize the visions of

Rousseau, Madison, Jefferson, John Stuart Mill, and the mythic town hall

tradition of early New England into one concise proclamation. Mixed with

Marxist and anarchist elements, SDS's Port Huron Statement was offered

as "an effort rooted in the ancient, still unfulfilled conception of man at-

taining determining influence over his circumstances of life."

> We would replace power rooted in possession, privilege,
> or circumstances by power and uniqueness rooted in love,
> reflectiveness, reason, and creativity. As a <u>social system</u>
> we seek the establishment of a democracy of individual
> participation, governed by two central aims: that the
> individual share in those social decisions determining the
> quality and direction of his life; that society be organized
> to encourage independent participation.[3]

SDS in the 1960s was pivotal to the reaffirmation of these two themes: the right

of <u>individuals</u> to participate in the decisions affecting their lives, and the right of

disparate <u>groups</u> to participate in the larger societal decisions by which they are

affected.

Another plank in the Port Huron Statement married the concerns of both

movements and stated yet a third theme played out in the times: creation of parallel

social/political structures "alternative" to those of the dominant institutions and

alternatives in which participatory-democratic values might be more fully realized. Port

Huron's example:

> The FDP (Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party) is a parallel
> political party, prompted by the conclusion that registration

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[2] Sale, 1973: 673-693.

[3] Jacobs and Landau, 1966: 155

of Negroes in the regular Democratic party of Mississippi is
presently impossible. Freedom Schools are parallel schools
. . . . In the north, neighborhood unions organized by SDS
represent parallel antipoverty agencies, challenging the
legitimacy of top-down middle-class "community organiza-
tions" sponsored by urban renewal and antipoverty admini-
strators.[4]

The advocates of alternative structures tended to be identified with efforts to change the society through the establishment of new centers of social life. This approach to social change was similar in emphasis to the counterculture call for "dropping out": jettisoning the decaying consciousness, culture, and structure of the dominant institutions and starting anew. Unlike the counterculture emphasis, however, alternatives-formation   as a strategy involved strategic attacks on "top-down, middle-class organizations," either as a progressive effort to spread the wisdom and practice of the alternative or as a defensive strategy to protect it.

Participation: Legislation

Between 1961 and 1967, New Frontier and Great Society legislation progressively expanded community involvement as a feature of a series of federal policies, including Johnson's War on Poverty. The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 called, in its now-famous Section 202, Title II, for Community Action Agencies "developed, conducted, and administered with the maximum feasible participation of residents of the areas and members of the groups served." Reflecting the protest language of the time, one participant in the construction of the antipoverty legislation

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[4] Lynd: 327-328.

contended, "We were trying to set up competing institutions for the traditional services of government and also trying to involve the poor in the decision-making process."[5]

Despite subsequent <u>ad</u> <u>hoc</u> success in Head Start, Community Action, and Model Cities programs, the response to these efforts by those affected, or those, like SDS, active on behalf of those affected, was massively negative. Suspected and actual manipulation of programs and participants by program authorities heightened the demand for alternative and nonmandated programs or "community control" of existing programs. During this conflict, the "maximum feasible participation of legislated programs confronted demands for "All Power to the People."

PARTICIPATION: THE LITERATURE

Interpretation of the struggles of this period enlarged an already active literature on local control, citizen participation, decentralization, and the like. Particularly vigorous was the engaged writing of liberal academics translating their political and citizenly commitments into critiques of federal programs and advocacy of alternative structures and strategies.[6]

Much of this literature concentrated on conditions of authentic versus inauthentic participation and its companion issue, decentralization. The literature is immense and focuses heavily on conditions surrounding the outcomes of legislatively mandated programs, especially on the general problem of the relations between those at the center and those at the periphery of power, authority, and resources.

Particularly frequent are typological schemes.[7] As with much of the literature, save the more radical rejection of all collaboration with institutional authority, these schemes focus on possible and/or desired outcomes of participation efforts: the

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[5] Breiseth, 1970: 315.

[6] Piven and Cloward, Flax,1>. 201 literature, etc.

[7] Kasperson and Breitbart, 1974: 1-16.

educative value of participation in a democracy ((therapy, informing); the manipulative problems posed for citizens by centralized authority (engineered consent, placation); and the redistributive outcomes (community power, citizen control).

Three of the participatory episodes described here involve situations in which centralized authority agreed to surrender some measure of control over the conception, process, and outcome of the place made. Of the four, only autonomous postmovement Operation Bootstrap was launched self-consciously--outside the web of public agency connections. Our cases, then, offer one view of the trajectory of participation in its most recent emergence, in one region of the United States. Each case presents a situation of progressively increased public agency involvement in the place-making process, on the one hand, and decreased vigor and focus of the participatory idea--as regenerated in the early 1960s--on the other. To the extent that these cases can claim to be representative of what happened in the United States, they tell an interesting story.

Participation: Two Spectra, Four Cases

The cases in this book cover two spectra of participation--the extent of the group's internal requirements for open and/or consensual rules guiding the effort to realize its goals, and the degree to which the place-making effort involved the group in mandated relations with a legal authority in control of resources.

Of the four cases, Operation Bootstrap and Kilimanjaro held the most radical mobilizing images of universal participation and alternative new life. Bootstrap's founding and growth were predicated on the active rejection of support by instituted authority. Leadership's problems included, among other things, creating a place by mobilizing the volunteeristic support of relatively advantaged blacks and whites while remaining faithful to the belief in general participation, including the poorest of community black people.

Unlike Bootstrap, the counterculture parents of Kilimanjaro School were enmeshed in the bureaucracy of the school district upon which they were dependent for resources. These advocates confronted the severe problem of trying to manage an alternative school on principles of consensual decision making, within a mandated bureaucratic program that was required, by federal policy, to include maximum citizen participation. Kilimanjaro's problems most closely approximate those typical of War on Poverty programs.

Peralta parents held no grand image of new life in America. Their goal was to save their neighborhood school, replace its old building with a new one, and reconstitute the school's curriculum. Their relatively unspecified notion of participation had three aspects: it was a banner legitimizing claims against school district bureaucracy; it was an indistinct, but similarly legitimizing label for the group's internal process; and it was a general anticipatory image of school life. Their major tasks involved the first and third of these: the first strategic, the third clarifying an idea that remained indistinct in the process of struggle.

Potrero del Sol, the last case, involves yet another complex mixture of "participations." An experienced and strategic city bureaucracy superimposed a mandated program of citizen participation in community park design on a neighborhood that included an already-active, elite-oriented group of advocates, liberal urban professionals, working-class conservatives, and a large and complex Latino population. The problems in this case revolved around the management of the participatory process by professional consultants--including the author--working for the architectural firm that won the contract for the park.

OUTLINE FOR EXAMINATION OF THE CASES

What should be examined in the unfolding process of place creation? Although process is evanescent, similar issues arise repeatedly. The people, the making, and

the place bracket the central problems, but are located in temporal, opinion, and resource environments. Success or failure of a place-making effort depends on the adequacy of its conception and the energy and sophistication of the prosecuting group. But the times, prevailing opinion, and social force behind particular popular and policy conceptions can act as independent sustained bases for such efforts.

These case studies, which "tell" very differently from each other, are examined in light of the issues outlined below. The cases are <u>not structured</u> according to the outline. But the elements of the outline repeatedly appear in place-making.

Because each of the different group enterprises happened during a particular time, surrounded and permeated by a distinctive quality social life (headlines, local and society-wide urgencies, a configuration of events), it is important to consider each in a discussion of that set of forces--the times out of which each emerged.

Similarly, the activity generated by the people and times always implies the task accepted from among the multiple challenges of the times. Resources--money, contacts, motivated others, talent, skills, and the like--are the material of place-making.

Originally, only the Bootstrap case was intended to be a study. The others are professional projects in which I was involved, reexamined by me to be understood in terms of the book's title and the concerns outlined earlier. This reexamination was conducted under the mild discipline of the issues outlined below.

I. THE TIMES
-- Tiers of relevant goings-on in the general social-
    cultural-political background (local-national)

-- Conditions apparently leading to, supporting, or
    suggesting the making of the Place

-- Place-specific features of The Times (e.g., the
    role of the Watts riots in the formation of
    local protest organizations and groups)

II. THE TASK

-- Reasons for assembling the group
-- Action required to achieve goals
-- Relation of accepted task to larger requirements,
    demands, forces abroad in The Times
-- (Inevitably, the Task and Times will define each
    other)

III. THE PEOPLE

-- Who are they?
-- Why this effort? Why acceptance of this Task?
    (self and other accounts)

IV. THE MATERIAL

-- What there is to work with
-- Resources like money, grants, political contacts,
    community groups, land, supportive events,
    organizations
-- The "stuff" available for The Making
        Unplanned for (surprising) stuff
        Scarce stuff
        Abundant stuff

V. THE MAKING

-- Setting things up
        Site
        Relations
        Resources
-- Attracting and blending resources
-- Taking advantage of events
-- Ducking obstacles
-- Developing and focusing ideology and
    energy on the goal

VI. THE PLACE

-- Why "there"?
-- The Need
-- Its features
-- How it operates
-- Differentiation--Connection to other places
-- What it is--what it does
-- For whom? Who cares?
-- Who benefits?

VI. THE DIFFERENCE (THE MAKING MADE)

-- A discursive estimate of what The Making of the Place
   accomplished

Each case is examined through the prism of these issues, <u>but is not presented</u> <u>mechanically through them</u>. The reader should view these issues, rather, as a template superimposed on each case, causing each episode to answer certain questions. And the cases vary. In one, the making of the place involved very few people, working on behalf of a large group of silent others, and responding directly and consciously to the times, in relative control of resources, central to the making. In another, nearly the opposite was true.

NOTES

1)   Social geographers, city planners, environmental psychologists, interpreters of architecture and the landscape have been most active in developing the concept of "place." A general emphasis in this literature is on the identity of good or "authentic" places (Relph, 1976: 63-78), their qualities, boundaries, and the like, in relation to design or planning interventions. Relph uses the term "place-making" (63) in this connection.

I take the liberty of violating this emergent conceptual realm. Sarason's "settings" describes most closely what I discuss in this book, but is somewhat distant from the sense "places" has in the popular lexicon. He specifies a new marriage, a

revolutionary movement, communes, the programmatic results of Peace Corps, and Head Start legislation as instances and says: "I have labeled this set of problems the creation of settings that provisionally may be defined as any instance in which two or more people come together in new relationships over a sustained period of time in order to achieve certain goals." (Sarason, 1972:1).

The extradisciplinary generality of his "label" is revealed in his introductory discussion of what is included under it. Contending that "in the past dec- ade or so, more new settings . . . have been created than in the entire pre- vious history of the human race," he elaborates:

> The creation of a new university, hospital, clinic, school, or community agency is another example of the creation of a setting, and within each of them is almost always found instances possessing the characteristics of the creation of a setting. For example when a hospital decides to set up a new intensive-care unit, or when a university launches a new department, or when a community initiates a new program for the inner city, we are again dealing with the creation of a setting. . . . It may be a new company, factory, restaurant, or store--the labels, overt forms, purposes, and size may vary in the extreme, but almost always they possess the defining provisional character- istics of the creation of a setting. (Sarason, 1972:2)

Sarason does not attempt a systematic definition of settings. He proceeds, instead, by elaborated examples and concludes:

> I came to see that people who create new settings have no organized formulation of what they are about. Phenom- enologically, they know what they are about, but it is not a phenomenology that reflects an independent, organized set of conceptions that guides and controls, that permits, indeed requires, one to take distance from the flow and clash of event. That a new setting has a prehistory, local and national; that locally many individuals and groups have a role in its birth; that much of its past is in the living present and must be dealt with; that resources

are always limited and usually overestimated because of a sense of mission and boundless enthusiasm; that conflict within the setting (and between settings) is a fact of social life exacerbated by conflicts between ideas; that a verbal agreement about values is no substitute for forging a constitution that anticipates and helps deal with differences in values, ideas, and change; that the leader is inevitably a model for the thinking and actions of others, and that in the usual unthinking course of things the leader visits on others his increased sense of privacy, fear of openness, dependence on extrinsic factor as criteria of worth, and boredom; that the usual structure of settings as well as the definition of and credentials for work tend rather quickly to extinguish curiosity and the sense of challenge--these are only some of the ingredients that would have to be encompassed by a formulation of the creation of settings. (Sarason, 1972:277)

2) Like the literature on "place," much of the participation literature is concerned with the goodness and authenticity of participatory processes as well as with the varied types. Kasperson and Breibart (1974) summarize and extend important early analyses of participation.

3) Typologies of Participation*
Daniel Fox
_____Decentralization
          Engineered Consent
          Therapy
_____

*See bibliography for sources.

Equal Protection
Employment
Redistribution of Power and Resources
Constituency
Development

Sherry Arnstein

Citizen Control   Degrees of Citizen Power
Delegate Power
Partnership

Placation   Degrees of Participation
Consultation
Informing

Therapy   Nonparticipation
Manipulation

J. & S. Van Til

Participation focuses on:

Participation is by	Administrative Concerns only	Political and Administrative Concerns
Elites only	Elite Coalition	Politics of reform
Elites and participation	Citizen advice	Pluralists non-elites
Non-elites	Client participation	Grassroots participation

Edmond Burke

Education-Therapy
Behavior Change
Staff Supplement

Co-optation
Community Power

The Brandeis Study

Limited Participation
Advisory Participation
Internal Advisory Participation
External Advisory Participation

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