My background as a sociologist.

- **Research:**
  - Sociology of professional expertise and the built environment.
  - New directions in planning: New Urbanism, Smart Growth and the “architecture of community.”
  - Public space, place-making and civic urbanism.

- **Practice:**
  - Community engagement, urban design and planning.
  - Design-centered collaboration (National Charrette Institute, since 2004).
2 mistaken assumptions

“"We just have to get the science right."”

- Environmental problems can be solved if we understand the functioning of natural systems.
- Nature and culture are distinct and separate systems that just need to be brought into alignment.

“"We just have to include everybody in the public process."”
What is a sustainable community?

- Energy efficient.
- Zero waste.
- Economically healthy.
- Equitable and democratically governed.
- Adaptive.
- Resilient.
- Continuously improving.
Taking sustainable cities seriously?
At least 25 of the 80 solutions identified by the “Drawdown” group are related to the built environment.

→ PLACES, as things we do together, not simply individual consumption choices.
'Sustainable development.'

The Brundtland Commission, 1987

UN Habitat III, 2016
The temptation of a technological solution.

- Designs for “zero carbon/zero waste” lifestyles tend to be technological solutions.

- We need to attend to the conditions necessary to maintain human engagement in meaningful places.

- Otherwise, “sustainable” patterns of building are simply not going to be sustainable—except by imposition.

SkyZed— the “Flower Tower” from zedfactory.com
Technological solutions.

- How will this building learn and adapt over time to human culture and society?
- Whose hand is that?
The rule of specialists.

Solving one problem at a time. No capacity for complex and adaptive responses.
The paradox of a system of experts

- The best technical knowledge often produces well-supported decisions that add up to disaster.

The problem with measuring ecological footprints.

- If human settlement involves an energy budget, we need to know what we are budgeting for.

Source: Creative Loafing
The value proposition: What kinds of places are worth sustaining?

- Places that preserve what people value.
- Places that realize community aspirations.
- Places that enhance the quality of life.
- Places that offer appropriate return on all investments.
- Places that are capable of adaptation and continuous improvement.
So... what do we want to sustain?
The development regime:
Institutionalized resistance to change.

- The intersection of public bureaucracy, democratic politics, and market-oriented institutions.

- Three paradoxes:
  - Specialization and the division of labor.
  - Environmental regulation that encourages a narrow perspective.
  - Public participation as part of the problem.
Science is not enough.

- Science has its own techniques for constructing consensus.
- It can’t resolve conflicts motivated by conflicting interests, values or political maneuvering.

Scientists who worked out the molecular structure of RNA

Tirana, Albania – Understanding morphological processes and urban growth
The paradox of public involvement.

- Legacy of urban renewal: “maximum feasible participation.”
- In the name of procedural fairness and democracy, we’ve created an unreliable process that undermines civic capacity and leads to reactionary politics (NIMBY).
- Major obstacle to creative change.
The politics of planning …

- Citizen intervention focused on procedural obstruction.
- Technical discussions become politically charged, political decisions become technically obscure.
- Political paralysis reinforces “business as usual” development patterns.
- Pervasive fear of “meeting the neighbors.”
How can resistance turn into positive community transformation?
Inclusive participation in what process?

- Not just *more* participation but higher *quality* engagement.
- To be truly inclusive, it is not enough just trying to make sure there is diversity represented in the room.
- It matters what you do once people are in the room.
- Building consensus-- but around what?
Collaboration by design.

- The real challenge of sustainability isn’t solving technical problems, but solving the problem of working together.

- Form and intention, vision and action.
Embedding people in the design process.

“Co-design” involving citizens and experts.
What is a Charrette?

- The charrette is a multi-day collaborative planning event that engages all affected parties to create and support a feasible plan.
Core Values
Structuring the interaction between citizens and experts.

- **Collaboration:**
  - Each individual’s unique contribution supports the best outcome.

- **Transparency:**
  - Clarity in rules, process and roles is essential to collaboration.

- **Shared Learning:**
  - Cross-disciplinary design assures reduced rework and facilitates implementation.

- **Direct, Honest, Timely Communication:**
  - Respectful communication fosters an environment of trust and reduces rework.
Three Big Challenges to Collaboration

- Lack of trust
- Fear of change
- Expert “silos.”
Trust and community capacity.

- Building relationships as process of constructing shared knowledge.
- Building capacity to realize a vision, as you create the vision.
Building a common narrative.

public meeting
vision

public meeting
review

open house
review

public meeting
confirmation

alternative
concepts

preferred
plan

plan
development
Key characteristics of the charrette process.

- Collaborative, integrative and dynamic work process, in a defined and compressed time frame.
- Short-feedback loops (short in time and space).
- Cross-disciplinary design (from the big picture to the details).
- Feasible, action-oriented outcome.
Planning for resilience.

- Creating the capacity for community action and adaptation.

https://www.planning.org/nationalcenters/hazards/innovations/
NCI Disaster Planning Process

Project Start Up, Sponsor, Project purpose, process

- Working Group Development Meetings
- Web-based Community Engagement Interviews
- Small Meetings w/Key Stakeholders
- Scenario Modeling Development
- Pre-Charrette Planning

Charrette Sprint
3 feedback loops w/live modeling

Action Plan & Implementation Working groups
Shift in the locus of agency

- Tactical Urbanism
- Incremental Development
- Lean Urbanism
- Bottom-up Urbanism
Underlying principles for building sustainable cities

- Small but strategic projects.
- Incremental but cumulative.
- Immediately responsive and adaptive.
- Shared learning by doing.
- Mobilizing community-based resources in a way that accomplishes goals AND builds community capabilities (social capital).
- Integrating VISION and ACTION.
Civic urbanism.

- It is not just about building the right kind of places, but building the right kind of place-making practices.

- Building social relationships, not by engineering places but by engaged place-making.

- Planning and design become opportunities for civic innovation.
"The lack of resources is no longer an excuse not to act. The idea that action should only be taken after all the answers and the resources have been found is a sure recipe for paralysis."

Jaime Lerner. (Architect, urbanist, former mayor of Curitiba, Brazil)

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