

Empowering Native Americans: Communication, Planning, and Dialogue for Eco-Tourism in Gallup, New Mexico

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A challenge for communication practitioners is facilitating increased representation of marginalized cultural groups in public dialogue. Utilizing a project between Gallup, New Mexico, and a Navajo community as a case study, this paper demonstrates how public planning across cultures can be conceptualized as a dialogic process. The author conducted a communication assessment of this eco-tourism project. Analysis revealed the importance of finding ways to meet the participatory needs of the marginalized community, instituting specialized communication practices, and purposefully preparing the contextual environment to support involvement in dialogue. These findings highlight the need for continued development of dialogic practices, and for closer ties among communication and planning scholars.

Keywords: Navajo; Intercultural Dialogue; Marginalized; Community; Planning

The project would use the information gathered to create a guide for pursuing development in the region when relational ties and trust are thin, yet political, legal, cultural, and economic challenges are great. (Jojola & Bobroff, 2003, p. 1)

Aboriginal communities around the world face historically negative conditions in their pursuit of economic and community development activities. A major challenge for communication scholars, therefore, is to facilitate increased representation of marginalized

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community members in public dialogue about community development. Gallup, New Mexico, is one such community which, as a result of intergovernmental and interagency efforts, embarked on an effort to change the local culture of exploitation. As part of that effort, participants decided to highlight eco-tourism as economically sustainable and began a project to expand an existing hiking trail, Pyramid Peak, into a loop trail that would cross Navajo land and include terrain suitable for mountain bikes, as well as for running, a traditional Navajo athletic and spiritual activity (Brooke, 1998). In this article I explore planning theory as a site for intercultural dialogue, using this case to address the following objective: What can planners and community dialogue practitioners learn from each other to increase success during communication in planning processes among aboriginal and nonaboriginal communities?

It is important to address the intersection between public planning processes and communication theory for two reasons. First, focusing upon communication issues in planning has important pragmatic consequences for communication theories. In other words, studying public planning expands the terrain, applicability and relevance of communication inquiry. Second, because planning processes are complex exemplars of communication in action, a range of communication theories have much to contribute to issues of public planning. In particular, perspectives on intercultural dialogue have special relevance given their focus on the cultural and communicative constitution of society by multiple publics.

Intercultural Dialogue and Community Planning

In order to shed light on issues of communication and dialogue in the Pyramid Peak case, I present a definition of dialogue as a participatory, public communication process. Second, I address the lack of intercultural communication research in the context of public dialogue, and third, I explicate three current planning theory perspectives for engaging marginalized communities and community members in planning as a public dialogue process. Subsequently, I explore the Pyramid Peak case to demonstrate this intersection between intercultural dialogue and public planning.

Dialogue as a Public Communication Process

Public dialogue in North American society is seen as a way for all citizens to engage in democratic processes (Dale & Newman, 2010; Drummond, 2002; Montiel, Atencio, & Mares, 2009). When citizens engage with each other in making decisions about their communities, they are participating in and creating the meaning of democracy. Definitions of dialogue and its manifestation as a public communication process are generally drawn from three theorists: David Bohm (1985), Michael Bahktin (1993), and Martin Buber (1972). However, differing assumptions underlie each theorist's use of the term dialogue. For the purposes of describing intercultural dialogue, Buber's (1972) definition is the most appropriate because it emphasizes the embeddedness of dialogue in social context. Unlike Bohm (1985), who saw dialogue as a special kind of communication that is outside of day-to-day activities, Buber posited that meaning constructs not only the interpersonal relationship but also the societal

institutions that govern human action. This view also goes beyond Bahktin's (1993) focus on the relational practices of how people connect with one another through language.

Dialogue, as Buber defined it, is more than the making of meaning. Dialogue is a genuine attempt to create something new. For true dialogue to happen the participants must be open to redefining their own meaning (Black, 2005). Because community development is a process of decision making about social structures, and because community requires the development of long-term relationships, it is this Buberian definition of dialogue that underpins the present study's exploration of intercultural dialogue in public participatory processes.

Intercultural Public Dialogue

Existing research on public dialogue primarily examines conflict and negotiation within homogenous cultural groups (Broome, 1995a; Cornell & Kalt, 1992; Davis & Reid, 1999; Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 2004), and from the perspective of group facilitation skills (Broome, 1995b; Littlejohn & Domenici, 2007). In recent years there has been some effort to investigate dialogue in international diplomacy (Collier, 2009; de Feijter, 2009; Hayden, 2009; Pwono, 2009), and in some North American intercultural contexts (Bell & Kahane, 2005; Orbe, 2004; Walker, 2004) including within Native American health and planning contexts (Chavez, Duran, Baker, Avila, & Wallerstein, 2003; Feit & Beaulieu, 2001).

However, little of this research investigates the need to increase the participation of marginalized cultural groups in public planning processes of the dominant culture that surrounds them, as in the case of aboriginal communities. For example, while Spano (2001) describes an important public dialogue project undertaken in California in response to community tensions between established and new residents, the case was not primarily about planning. Three other examples of communication scholars who investigate both power dynamics and culturally specific communication expectations as barriers to participation in decision-making dialogue are described below.

First, Broome (1995a, 1995b) offers application-based processes for Native American communities that do not interact in the Eurocentric North American communication norm. For example, the Comanche tribe was able to identify "inappropriate form of government" (Broome, 1995b, p. 37) as the number one barrier to participation in tribal governance. Broome's work concentrates on acknowledging and identifying alternative communication structures and behaviors that are culturally responsive in a nondominant culture public sphere.

Second, Squires (2002) expands the notion of how public sphere is defined and utilized. Exploring mainly African American experiences, she posits that differentiating the dominant public sphere (Habermas, 1990) from *counterpublics* solely on the basis of group identity obscures other issues such as how successful certain publics are in relation to others. She distinguishes three types of marginalized publics: enclaves, counterpublics, and satellite publics. Enclaves are publics that remain separate

due to oppressive relations in order to survive or avoid negative actions towards them, but who may plan and debate internally. Counterpublics engage with the wider public in order to test ideas and utilize public methods of calling attention to social issues and may join in coalitions with supporters. Satellite publics separate themselves for reasons other than oppression, but engage erratically with the broader public, often in an adversarial position (e.g., white supremacists).

Third, Shome and Hegde (2002) suggest that the politics of communication are of central importance for understanding the contradictions and ambivalence of a deeply divided world such as that which exists between Native American and non-Native American communities. Communication phenomena themselves, therefore, must be regarded critically. These include media images and socially constructed identities for aboriginal persons, the agency of Native Americans in the decision-making processes, and the ability to see aboriginal culture(s) as growing and changing rather than stuck in a time capsule from some distant past. Media images, whether through local newspapers (LaFever & Neel, 2003) or on highway billboards, are a part of identity construction for Native American peoples in the Gallup area.

Additionally, Shome (2003) posits that space is a political construct that plays a role in the production and reproduction of social power through communication practices, and needs to be recognized as a context for communication. Space is constituted through human relations and material practices and therefore helps craft social relations through issues such as access and mobility, distributions of populations, inclusion and exclusion, and place-based identities (Anzaldúa, 1987; D'Arcus, 2000). Space, as it is described by these theorists is very much a part of the Native American world where land, as both an economic base and a place of identity, has been stolen and encroached upon by the invaders that now make up neighboring communities (Walker, 2004).

Public Planning as Public Dialogue

Recognizing the unique pressures on aboriginal communities by their dominant culture neighbors, a few planning scholars have investigated ways to increase involvement of marginalized Native American members in community development through the use of dialogic processes. Rahder (1999) worked with inner-city women to facilitate collaboration with agencies to improve social services. Freedman (2007) investigated local communities' engagement in discussing ways to protect sacred Native American sites on public land, and LaFever (2008) posited the importance of relationship-building as essential to decision-making dialogue among Native American and outside organizations.

All of these contexts can be considered as community planning, an area where communication processes are essential but where intersections between planning and communication theory are undertheorized. It is my contention that planning itself is a form of public dialogue whereby community members can be involved in making decisions about their locality. Community development takes place at the institutional level of meaning-making and citizen participation is intended to involve

members of society in processes of listening, learning, teaching, and creating new meanings and institutional structures. Planning is the form that most community development initiatives utilize to bring about new ways of doing things and for involving citizens in the creation of those changes. Therefore, it is consistent to think of planning as a form of Buberian dialogue.

Emphasizing public participation in planning captures the idea that it takes a special kind of effort to get community members to contribute personal knowledge to a communal decision. Three theoretical perspectives on planning inform the subject of participation as a form of public dialogue, with an emphasis on multicultural communities: communicative action (Forester, 1999, 2000; Healey, 2003); insurgent historiography (Epstein, 1998; Rahder, 1999; Thomas, 1998); and spatial production (Perry, 1995; Soja, 1996). I will now discuss each of these.

Communicative action

Planners have understood for some time the need to involve citizens and stakeholders in decision making about development in their communities (Sanoff, 2000). In the 1970s a number of planners highlighted and provided models for citizen involvement (Burke, 1979). However, these early proponents of citizen participation in planning assumed a culturally homogenous citizenry who just needed the opportunity to get together, in a public forum, to understand each other through rational discussion, in order to reach agreement on directions for the future.

According to the theoretical stance of communicative action (Habermas, 1990), humans come to know their own condition through the act of “rational” dialogue with each other. This interaction allows them to socially construct common meanings and develop common values and standards in order to regulate society. People want to be active in constructing their own lives, and in order to accomplish this must participate with each other publicly.

More recently, planning scholars and practitioners (Forester, 1999, 2000; Guyette, 1996; Healey, 2003) have gone beyond this view of participation (Alexander, 1996), and have adopted a more critical stance that investigates power relations in planning. These scholars adopted Habermas’ (1990) theory of communicative action, while attempting to develop normative structures that would allow for all citizens to have the equal opportunity, and equal voice, that Habermas theorized. For example, Forester (1999) emphasizes that participants should have the time and space to talk about and express the pain they have experienced from exclusion and exploitation.

Insurgent historiography

Other planning theorists do not see these attempts at creating power balance as going far enough in increasing the participation of marginalized cultural groups in public processes. Theorists who come from the insurgent historiography perspective want to identify ways that marginalized groups can be empowered rather than merely responding; and they recognize that resistance to efforts to gain participation is a legitimate response by marginalized communities.

The insurgent historiography planning perspective has developed from postcolonial theory that emphasizes the need for knowledge and action about oppression and powerlessness in the context of colonialism. Individual identity is developed always in relation to existing societal structures and cannot be universalized outside of particular contexts (Mohanty, 1991). Identity development is often structured around a socially constructed notion of status that is dependent on skin color, socioeconomic status, gender, religion, and other markers of difference between peoples.

These identities carry with them more (or less) power than others, creating a continual production and reproduction of levels of ability to affect changes in and/or create new societal systems. Groups and individuals who hold less power, the marginalized and disenfranchised, act to resist the resulting oppression that they experience, often creating social movements. In order for disenfranchised groups to be able to make the necessary changes in societal structures they must be able to recognize their own history of oppression, work together to gain power, and act to transform society.

Empowerment, in the form of individual and group ability to gain control over life circumstances (Thomas, 1998) is a major concept in insurgent historiography. An essential ingredient to empowerment can be traced to Freiré's (1968/1970) theory of dialogical action and the concept of conscientization. The disenfranchised must be able to recognize and think critically about their oppression. It is therefore essential to recognize such oppressive historical action as colonialism, and the continuing effects of that history on current social relationships. These histories also affect the ability of groups to gain access to decision-making structures due to institutional racism that remains unrecognized, and therefore not dealt with, in the dominant society.

Resistance by the oppressed is therefore essential for empowerment. However, it is crucial to recognize that power is not a monolithic construct that can be thrown off all at once. Epstein (1998) posits that each small act of resistance helps cumulatively transform society. Public planning situations offer contexts for this continual process of transformation. Planners themselves are required in these situations to take a critical stance about the effects of their own practices (Epstein, 1998; Rahder, 1999; Thomas, 1998), so that new methodologies for practical application in mixed cultural settings can take shape. For example, Jojola's (2008) and Rahder's (1999) research posits that honoring the indigenous systems of values and decision making within disenfranchised Native American groups is an important step in developing a sense of power to participate in community development. Such moves begin to build normative structures whose underlying principles are meant to place the power in the hands of those who are initially powerless in dominant communication and decision-making structures.

Spatial production

The use of space has always been an integral part of public planning processes but *spatialization*, or the process of overcoming the constraints of space and time in social life (LeFebvre, 1974/1991) encompasses three conceptions of space that explain

material practices and their relationship to societal power structures: spatial practice (the experience of the physical such as walking around town); representations of space (abstractions of experience such as talking to your friends about what it is like to walk around town); and social construction of space (the practices that are products of experience and thought such as norms for what are appropriate behaviors when walking around town).

Soja (1996) expands this conception of social space into what he refers to as *thirdspace*: A place where human agency and imagination can free itself from limiting social structures. In a spatial production theory of planning, humans disrupt and disorder binary, restrictive, social constructs in order to create space to engage in a critical exchange about the control of political and economic processes. Thirdspace draws attention to how humans actively construct space by daily action through appropriation and use, through domination and control, and through the production of new spaces (Harvey, 1989). Perry (1995) stipulates that the spatial goal of planning is to produce such thirdspace, including the entire cyclical process from idea of space, to population of that space, through changes in population and repopulation.

The following case study from an economic development project in Gallup, New Mexico, illuminates how intercultural communication and planning literature intersect and can be useful to each other in the context of Native American participation in public planning by dominant culture communities. The project, an effort to develop an eco-tourism hiking trail, met a roadblock when the interests of individual Navajo land owners (allottees) and the interests of the development consortium came into conflict. My role in working on this project with a team of architecture, planning and law students was to investigate and analyze communication among the parties and to identify barriers to participation for culturally marginalized members and communities.

The Pyramid Peak Project

Gallup, New Mexico, is located in the southwestern United States in an area that is still referred to legally and in official federal government documents as “Indian Country” (Baca, 2001). There are three local governance structures in the area immediately around Gallup: the McKinley County Council of Governments (COG), the City of Gallup, and the Churchrock Chapter of the Navajo Nation.

The population of the area is primarily aboriginal, including members of the Navajo Nation, the Hopi and a number of Pueblos (including Zuni and Laguna). The city of Gallup’s population is 37% aboriginal (32% Navajo) and 45% designated as White (Census, 2010), with 35% reporting Hispanic or Latino heritage. Part of the responsibilities of COG is to be involved in economic development planning on a regional basis, whereas the City of Gallup and the Churchrock Chapter are responsible for their own localities. However, all three have attempted to work together on a number of economic development projects to increase both tourism and Native American entrepreneurship.

Both government and nonprofit agencies have come together as “representatives” of various citizens to engage in economic development planning. The primary motivator for the economic development initiative was to replace a culture of exploitation (of the land and of aboriginal communities), that has operated in the area for decades, with ecologically friendly tourism and Native American entrepreneurship. In the present article I will look at only one project, the development of a loop trail for hiking and cycling to Pyramid Peak.

In planning to emphasize eco-tourism, the mayor of Gallup conducted a survey of the Gallup population for citizen input. The Community Services Coordinator of the Churchrock Chapter brought resolutions to chapter house community meetings and then liaised, along with the Churchrock Tourism Action Committee (CTAC) Coordinator, with the other Gallup and COG entities. The local VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) and YCC (Youth Conservation Corps) were also an integral part of the planning effort (Bality, 2010). Individuals and businesses within the Gallup community also offered support for development such as the Ellis Tanner Trading Co. and the Circle of Light Mural by Navajo artist Chester Kahn (Donovan, 2008).

These groups had previously coordinated their efforts on several successful economic development projects adjacent to the Churchrock Chapter lands, including a playground, a hot air balloon rally (K. Lohmann, personal communication, March 13, 2004), and an expansion of the Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial event that had been operating since 1922 (Linford, 1991). Despite these prior successes, plans for the Pyramid Peak trail had come to a halt, and when the stakeholders heard that there might be graduate students from the university available to help them with planning, they organized a session to explain the history of the project to the university class. Eight students formed the team and agreed to investigate law governing Indian land, eco-tourism as an economic development incubator, trail-building logistics, and stakeholder communication. The team, instructors, and other project teams met weekly to discuss common issues and possible solutions. For me, as the team member working on communication, it initially seemed that every effort was being made to hear the voices of all local citizens, yet dialogue between Navajo and other stakeholders had reached an impasse.

Data Sources

My task, as proposed to the Pyramid Peak project team, was to conduct a communication assessment, while also drawing on and contributing knowledge to the rest of the team. The steps that I engaged in during my assessment were as follows: (1) to interview participants and review documents regarding the communication process to date, communication linkages between participants, obstacles and communication issues, and current plans for proceeding and decision making; and (2) to develop recommendations for future communication processes. To collect information on which to base the assessment and recommendations, I used three sources: (a) documents provided by the various stakeholder groups; (b) observational and content notes recorded by hand during four stakeholder meetings; and (c) three

transcripts of audio-taped sessions including the project orientation and meetings with individuals from the VISTA and YCC organizations.

Researcher Impact on Meaning of the Data

While my own family has a hidden history of aboriginal American ancestry, I have never lived the experiences of Native American peoples. My interest in this topic stems from being asked to facilitate public dialogue along with a desire to change the public consultation systems that the dominant culture uses. This research, and ultimately my role, was about identifying what such change means. My desire was to pinpoint a list of practical actions that dominant culture communities who truly wish to change the participatory dynamics of whose voice gets heard, can implement in a way that is not based on an attitude of superiority and inferiority, or of exploiter and exploited.

The Pyramid Peak Trail project team comprised a mix of aboriginal and nonaboriginal scholars. While two team members were from the Navajo Nation, none of us were from either Gallup or the Churchrock Chapter. I was the team member who spent the most time actually in Gallup talking to stakeholders involved in the project. Although outsiders, because of a history of project-planning assistance offered through the university, we were viewed as having some academic expertise that could assist in the possible success of the project.

Analysis

In order to analyze and make recommendations for intercultural dialogue in the Gallup case, I used a framework developed from a prior research project (LaFever, 2009) that incorporated both communication and critical planning theory. This framework consists of a step-by-step communication process that focuses on relationship-building among marginalized and dominant culture sectors of the community, taking into account issues such as empowerment, time orientation, space- and place-based identity, and historical context. For example, some of the steps in the 9P Planning framework are Purpose, Personal Links, and Place. Therefore, I asked questions about the vision for the project, persons who provided important linkages between stakeholders, and about where and how dialogic events were held.

I developed a list of questions using this framework as my guide for gathering information from verbal and written sources as well as from visual and aural observation. The present article concentrates on exploring areas where communication and planning theory intersect based on the three planning theoretical perspectives outlined earlier, and within the context of increasing the participation of marginalized cultural groups in the public dialogue of community development.

Verification of Findings

In order to verify the accuracy of my assessment of the communication interactions in the Gallup case, I presented the findings to the VISTA, YCC and CTAC

coordinators, and at the project presentation where other stakeholders were also invited. I recorded comments made by the stakeholders during these meetings and incorporated them into the final recommendations. For example, while I had outlined only one condition for success (the completion of a loop trail), it was noted that a status quo option for success in the project needed to be included. This option would be to continue with an informal agreement for Churchrock allottees to allow access across their land on a case by case basis for community events.

Findings and Analysis

Findings and analysis of intercultural dialogic processes in the Pyramid Peak trail project are considered within each of the three planning perspectives discussed earlier: communicative action, insurgent historiography, and spatial production. This enables the identification of ways that planners and community dialogue practitioners can learn from each to increase success during communication in planning processes between Native American and non-Native American communities.

Communicative action in Gallup

The communicative action view of participation in planning seemed to be the “theory in use” at the Gallup project. For example, an array as wide as possible of the community was invited to participate in the planning of the eco-tourism project; meetings were held in various locations, including at Churchrock Chapter; and meetings included opportunities for anyone to speak. That equal power and rational discussion were assumed on the part of the dominant culture group was evident when one participant (non-Native American) told me about passing the microphone to a Navajo participant after he had finished speaking:

I’m at this Chapter House and all of a sudden the shit hits the fan. I am standing there with a microphone, explaining, and even though from my radical days I know I’m not supposed to turn over the microphone to the antagonists in the crowd, it just kind of leaped from my hand.

The attitude was that equal power would be honored and that equal opportunity had been created, but what that meant was not the same for everyone. It is unlikely that the Navajo participants would have identified themselves as “antagonists.”

In Squires’ (2002) terms, Navajo of Churchrock Chapter can best be described as a counterpublic enclave: A public that desires to remain separate due to oppressive relations and/or to avoid negative actions towards themselves, but who may plan and debate internally. In this case it is important to identify a preference to remain separate as a survival choice; this helps to focus in on oppression and reactions to oppression as the major barrier to participation and to sustaining that participation. The Navajo participant alluded to in the quote above says:

that fence you crossed . . . don’t you know what fences are for? . . . that’s my land . . . the balloonists, when they come in we open our gates for them. We’re really good people but you crossed that fence without talking to us.

This statement vividly captures the feeling, held by Navajo participants, that it was just one more time when Navajo rights were trampled.

The meeting at Churchrock Chapter was configured in a typical way for public meetings. A microphone is given first to somebody who lays out the issue, and then speakers may respond as the microphone is passed, with the intention that a vote of some sort will take place at the end and the project will proceed. As noted by Broome (1995a), this is not necessarily an indigenous way of doing things. For Navajo, for instance, it is more common for the people with the project to sit in a place where they are expected only to listen while the community being consulted comes and tells them how they feel and of their experiences. This can go on for as long as there is anybody wishing to speak, perhaps even for days, with participants coming and going as they have time (LaFever, 2009).

Understanding Navajo public spheres as enclaves and expanding ways in which public meetings are held, therefore, offers a more expansive way of investigating participatory practices of communities like Churchrock Chapter, and contributes significantly to planning theory and practice. For example, having a meeting at Churchrock Chapter where only Navajo members are able to speak would offer an opportunity to concentrate on listening and acting to equalize power.

Insurgent historiography in Gallup

Viewing the Pyramid Peak project through the lens of insurgent historiography enables the recognition of empowerment and resistance in the dialogic process. This in turn means that the existing processes of the Navajo Nation and the Churchrock Chapter need to be given priority in the context of planning for the entire area. Doing so helps contest attitudes of neocolonialism (Nkrumah, 1965) whereby populations are exploited for their labor and resources in order to feed an appetite for finished physical or cultural commodities, a point which is particularly relevant when Native Americans are seen as commodified parts of the landscape that is being sold to visitors (Jojola, 1996).

Attempts by Native American communities to empower themselves were evident in discussions about new entrepreneurship initiatives. The Executive Director of the Gallup Inter-Tribal Ceremonial Association (from Laguna Pueblo) explains:

The mission of the ceremonial is simple, preservation of the culture and do business. . . . When you come to Gallup you notice that Coal Avenue alone probably has a dozen empty buildings . . . (yet) for the gross receipts tax in the state of New Mexico, Gallup holds number five. Within a radius of 100 miles there must be 200,000 Navajos, Zuni, Laguna, Acoma, and Hopi people. They contribute to the success of this town. . . . I see these empty buildings as a way to support Indian entrepreneurship. (J. Athens, personal communication, January 31, 2004)

However, attempts towards empowerment were tempered by continued commodification of Navajo residents, including asking them to wear “traditional dress” to act as ambassadors to tourists, and to provide dance performances and roadside sale

of Navajo arts. In order to get tourists to come to summer events downtown, Mr. Athens explains:

We're going to hire young women and young men that are people friendly . . . so that when a man and wife come from Louisville, Kentucky and they drive into a local motel they are greeted and welcomed by somebody that is dressed in full regalia . . . giving them a flyer of what is available.

Resistance was also starkly evident during the data gathering for this project in that any meeting not held on Churchrock land was not attended by members of the Churchrock community, other than by the economic initiatives coordinator. While neocolonial dimensions of entrepreneurship and commodification are recognized and critiqued to some extent by many of the Native American and non-Native American community members, the attitude towards Native American peoples as objects in the cultural landscape is so pervasive that it is hard to overcome. The stated objectives of eco-tourism and of entrepreneurial programs that are being initiated are that any economic development activities need to be sensitive to issues of exploitation. Inadequate information gathering about historical cultural practices and attitudes that ask Native Americans to forget past oppression and exploitation are ongoing symptoms of a pervasive neocolonial attitude in the Gallup area.

Adopting an insurgent historiographical stance in this situation is therefore very appropriate for planners. This would mean constantly and diligently questioning each action and proposal as to its impact on continuing exploitation. One participant explained to me that the project really needed to ask who the project was actually being developed for: the local residents or visitors from outside the area. In an attempt to emphasize the importance of this question, he indicated that if it was truly meant to serve the local population and not to exploit them, then we should go out on the street and remind ourselves of who really lives here—Native American and Latino communities—and that eco-tourism biking trails did not necessarily serve them. He suggested that in-town walking pathways would be much more useful. In sum, the chief contribution of such postcolonial theorizing of communication practice is to highlight issues of empowerment and resistance, and in the process deconstruct neocolonialism and its impact on the identity of marginalized groups.

Spatial production in Gallup

The question of who the project is for, and whether in-town walking trails are a more important point for consideration inserts itself into an exploration of the spatial production perspective. Perry (1995) argues that planners often restrict what he calls the “scale” of their planning objectives. They think of regions as being too large to deal with and homes as being too small. Both spaces are extremely important in the Gallup area. The COG wanted to develop a tourism plan that would encompass and use the entire county, while the Navajo were most concerned, not about the boundaries of the land, but about their sense of the land, and their tenure on that land, as home.

It is in notions of land tenure versus land use (Jojola, 2008) where the definition of spatial practices most obviously affects the communication of planning objectives across cultures in this situation. Land tenure, as practiced traditionally in Native American societies, designates individuals, based on birthright and inheritance, as caretakers of the land with obligations in order to sustain the community. Land use, on the other hand, views land and everything connected to it, as a commodity for producing material goods and profits. The inability of dominant culture participants in the Pyramid Peak trail project to understand, and/or even consider that there might be a different conception of identity tied to the land, created a roadblock in a possible economic development plan.

For example, Navajo allottees have a special relationship to the land as a result of regulations administered by the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI). Allotments are land held in trust by the U.S. government for individual tribal members. Tribal governments are not generally the decision-makers with regard to right-of-way easements, which tend to reinforce a land-use worldview. The Secretary of the DOI can authorize an easement and does not need the consent of all the allottees if one of the following conditions is met:

- 1) the land is owned by more than one person, and the majority of owners give consent; 2) the whereabouts of the owner is unknown but majority of known owners give consent; 4) the heirs have not been determined; 5) the owners are too numerous. In these situations, the Secretary must also determine that granting the rights-of-way will not cause substantial injury to person or land. (Council of Energy Resource Tribes, 2005, p. 7; misnumbering in original)

Compare the description above to what actually happened: (1) Initiation of Pyramid Peak Loop trail construction through a VISTA and YCC project grant after verbal approval was given by Churchrock economic coordinator on behalf of Churchrock Chapter to cross allotment lands; (2) verbal indications from affected allottees of nonconsent to cross their land (300 allottees affected); (3) door-to-door survey by VISTA and YCC project coordinator which indicated that the main desire of the allottees may be to maintain current informal access to county land for sheep grazing; and (4) meeting held at Churchrock Chapter where consent was not obtained. The consultation process, therefore, served to preserve local notions of land tenure by preserving a more permeable version of the formal border space. The existence of such space for the Navajo and other tribes is a valuable asset in their continued struggle to appropriate, use, dominate, control, and produce their own space.

The competing notions of land tenure and land use, therefore, serve to define space in different ways and have direct implications for planning processes. If the space for making decisions is structured to utilize dominant culture practices such as majority rule, adversarial positioning, and time-constrained planning, it is likely to reinforce dominant spatial notions of land use. Further, the marginalization of land tenure makes it likely that nondominant culture members will not have any desire to participate within that type of forum.

Discussion

While each of the three communication perspectives on planning contain differing assumptions about the way that humans act and the conditions that need to exist in order for them to act, their relevance to the Gallup case indicates that they are not mutually exclusive. All three views take critical stances about the way that society is structured. Additionally, all three see humans as active in being able to change oppressive conditions that surround their lives. Finally, all three perspectives expand notions of citizen participation in community and economic development. This is especially relevant in contexts where disenfranchised peoples, and those who do not have access to, or do not use, dominant culture forms of communication are part of the social context of the economic development process.

As indicated previously, my role in the project was to assess and make recommendations about the communication process. While my list of recommendations was extensive and specific to this particular project, I concentrate here on what planners and community dialogue practitioners can learn from each other to increase success during communication in planning processes between aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities. There are three primary lessons that emerge from the Gallup, New Mexico, experience, which in turn have implications for understanding intercultural dialogue in Buberian terms.

The lesson that may be the most difficult for communities to undertake is their own re-education. Such re-education, central to Buberian methods, is necessarily intercultural. While the Gallup community in general acknowledged the need to change their culture from one of exploitation to one of entrepreneurship, there was no critical look at what the shift to entrepreneurship itself might mean. Knowledge about the legal implications for the Navajo allottees was minimal, even for community members who had ongoing relationships within the Navajo community. There was also a reluctance to face the strong emotions of Churchrock members that were a result of long-standing historical issues around land tenure and enduring racism. As a result, the first lesson highlighted here for any proposed dialogue process among Native American and non-Native American communities is that non-Native American participants, whether community members or practitioners, must be willing and ready to be educated by the Native American community about their needs and requirements.

Some planning theorists (Forester, 1999, 2000; Healey, 2003) have begun to adopt practices that investigate changes that are needed to increase the participation of nondominant cultural groups in public decision making about planning issues. Forester (2000) suggests that it is not always necessary to have common ground during dialogue, that citizens with a history of traumatic relations in the dominant society (i.e., Native Americans) cannot deliberate without the dominant society fully recognizing the context of their history, and that specific efforts must be made in adversarial contexts.

Healey (2003) asks similar questions about the context of intercultural relationships and delves into spatial theory and the ability of culturally diverse people in

complex webs of social relationships to coexist. However, neither of these theorists offers new normative structures and methods. More research is needed to identify, explore, and develop such dialogic practices and formats such as listening to Native American concerns without comment. Doing so is immensely relevant for planning practitioners. Also, while some planners are incorporating new communication strategies in Native American communities (Guyette, 1996), they continue to use terminology and procedural methods that have been developed in dominant cultures: for example, the use of the SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats). Secondly, therefore, specialized communication practices must be instituted based on both recent developments in communication theory and in relation to the exigencies of the particular Native American community.

Communication theorists offer a number of normative public dialogue practices that can assist planners in gaining participation from marginalized community members. These practices include interpersonal relationship-building and recognition of differences in what are considered appropriate ways for participating in community decision making. Additionally, the Gallup case demonstrates that it is critical to ensure that communication structures are put into place that will support the ability of community members to participate, attend to the use of supporting visual images and media portrayals, allow time for dialogue processes to deal with complicated issues, and ensure that there is a safe environment for dealing with difficult issues such as racism and negative histories. As a result, the third lesson is that planning processes must pay attention to preparing the contextual environment to support success during dialogue.

Conclusion

Organizations in the Gallup, New Mexico, area have created an extensive eco-tourism trail system that caters to hikers, runners, and cyclists. Unfortunately, the original idea of a loop trail for Pyramid Peak never came to fruition. However, the Churchrock Chapter continues to work on economic development and to participate with the Gallup community one project at a time while adamant about not endangering their own rights to the land that they have fought so hard to hang on to. The findings in this case study serve to emphasize the need for continued development of new dialogic practices for use among cultural groups during public dialogue processes, and for closer ties among communication and planning scholars.

The future practical, theoretical and methodological implications of the Pyramid Peak project case study are many. Developing and instituting new practices that support the participation of marginalized cultural groups in planning and development within larger communities is hard work. There is no magic formula that will fit every locale. Practitioners must investigate the context closely and spend time listening to the members of the marginalized groups. There are various materials available to assist in such an endeavor, including this author's 9P Planning model (LaFever, 2009). More materials need to be developed.

In addition to the need for new dialogic practices, involvement in this project highlighted the need to create closer ties between schools of community, regional and urban planning and schools of communication, especially in the field of intercultural communication. The outcome and end results of planning cannot in reality be separated from the process of engaging communities in dialogue. Planners and communication practitioners will be better prepared by understanding the conceptual terminology from the other discipline and will be able to take a more holistic approach to the problems they are investigating. This may mean cross-listing or creating specialized courses, while joining planning and communication theories when engaging in community projects as a way for researchers to explore new ideas.

The planning discipline is a natural location to use case studies to test the validity of the findings offered here. It is common, given the nature of planning, that students are exposed to projects and communities where marginalized community members are not fully participant in creating the future of their own community living space. Knowing whether the findings in Gallup are also applicable to communities other than Navajo would be of great value. Careful structuring and attention to the communication needs of aboriginal, or other marginalized cultural groups, can have a profound effect on participation in planning and in citizenship.

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