

## **Collaborative planning partnerships for affordable housing: rights, needs and interests**

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In recent years, collaborative planning has become dominant in both planning theory and practice, attracting both strong proponents (Healey, 1997; Forester, 1999; Innes and Booher, 2010) and excoriating critics (Sanders, 1997; Rydin, 2007; Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012). Case studies of collaborative planning, whether laudatory, critical, or somewhere in between, have tended to focus on neighbourhood planning, metropolitan strategy formulation, and environmental management (McCann, 2001; Margerum, 2002; Hopkins, 2010; Legacy, 2012)

This paper takes a comparative approach to describing and analysing collaborative partnerships for affordable housing in four cities of the developed world. In Portland, US and Vancouver, Canada, affordable housing partnerships have grown out of a relatively consensual tradition of metropolitan governance, while in Melbourne, Australia, and Toronto, Canada, affordable housing partnerships have found it somewhat more difficult to establish themselves in a highly fragmented and politicized local governance context. In all of these cities, affordable housing partnerships are attempting to improve policies and practices, towards both more and better housing for low and moderate income households.

The paper is based on total of 30 interviews in these four cities, with a parallel set of affordable housing actors: housing officers in local, metropolitan and/or state/provincial government; private developers or development peak bodies taking a lead role in affordable housing advocacy; community housing leaders with a similar role; and social investors working on affordable housing financing. The interviews focused on how these actors worked in partnerships and their perceived advantages, but definitional questions were also asked to ascertain sometimes conflicting world views.

The interview question that received the most intriguing, complex and passionate answers was whether the organization or individual used the 'right to housing' in their work on improving affordable housing outcomes, and if so, how they used that concept. Only a small minority of the 30 respondents gave an unqualified 'yes' to whether they incorporated the right to housing in their work developing affordable housing, or creating policy promoting affordable housing. The other respondents focused on economic costs and benefits of providing housing to low income people, or began to question whether there is, indeed, a right to shelter. The paper uses the responses to the question on the 'right to housing' as a starting point to investigate differing discourses, processes and outcomes of affordable housing deliberative partnerships. Fraser's (1989) framework of 'rights talk', 'needs talk' and 'interests talk' provides the theoretical basis of questioning whether agonistic planning is really preferable to the 'post-politics' of collaborative planning in providing affordable housing solutions.

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