

## **Participatory practices of planning in times of (neo-liberal) globalization. North, South and beyond**

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Planning practices in different parts of the world reflect local institutions' beliefs, behaviors, and social patterns. Similarly, participatory discourses seem to mean differently in different settings and contexts. We may use similar words to express different ideas, perceiving differently what we see or hear. This round table intends to exchange ideas and encourage discussions on how we understand the planning practice in general, and participatory planning practices in particular, by taking into account the values and the meanings attached to these words in Brazil and the United States. How do we understand technical/rational/analytical activity directed to solve (or avoid) world systemic problems? To which extent is the planning practice engaged with change and innovation to transform unfair or unjust social realities? Contemporary cities in the global North and South are seeing spaces of conflicts of many kinds, where affections emerge, grievances manifest, and collective identities are created and re-

created. Urban social movements are one expression of such conflicts. They appear when people seek to exercise control over the built environment, counteract social and economic inequity, and influence the political process. In turn, local governments search for strategies and techniques to address the flow of disputes as they emerge from grassroots movements. The city, as generative space of mobilizations, becomes the forefront of new governmental tactics to address citizens' concerns or produce orderly political behavior. In some settings, participatory institutions may co-opt existing social movements, undermining their capacities to accomplish their goals and achieve social justice. In other settings, participatory planning may foster the creation of new civic organizations and autonomous movements that may lead to the intensification or expansion of social mobilization. In any case, strategies increasingly involve participatory planning or some degree of citizen input in public decisions. The call for participation in city planning and policy development has greatly increased in recent years. This call emerges from a broad range of demands, such as political voice, property rights, social inclusion or environmental justice. In the context of the democratization of the "right to the city", an increasing number of governmental and non-governmental organizations are engaging participatory practices. These practices can combine different techniques and multiple purposes, and produce equally varying outcomes, more or less legitimate. Participatory practices can certainly lead to community empowerment, but they can also be misused to legitimize neoliberal agendas by means of invented consensus. They can become part of large urban development schemes that benefit some and marginalize others. Where objectives are not so transparent, outcomes from participatory processes can serve to deepen exclusion of particular groups, rather than fostering equity and community empowerment. This round table presents theoretical and empirical papers on often ambiguous and conflicting participatory planning practices. These contributions intend to identify different participation strategies and techniques, and discuss how they are produced and implemented in different parts of the world. We would like to explore the public frameworks from which these practices emerge as well as the intentions, motives and expectations of those engaged in participation processes. What are the desired outcomes of participatory processes and to which extent do they correspond

to the discourses and justifications of the actors involved? Finally, what are the actual effects of such participatory experiments on actual urban social movements?