"Citizen Dialogues" and the Inclusive City

- How can urban governments together with other actors combat social segregation?

- How can we create a city for all its inhabitants?

Some experiences and perspectives from a study within the "interplace"-project

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Nazem Tahvilzadeh, PhD Public Administration

School of Public Administration, Göteborg University

Centre for Environment and Sustainability (Chalmers)

The Sustainable City

= The right for all to shape and reshape the city

= democracy and participation

BUT HOW?

1) Deliberative/collaborative reforms

2) Strengthening established institutions

(governmental bodies, electoral participation
parties and social movements)

Case study
"Göteborg– a city for everybody"

We are living in a segregated city which is reflected in many ways – geographic, ethnic, economic, educative, social and in health. There are vast differences in living conditions and future outlooks in the city. We must therefore strengthen the dialogue between people in our city.

(Budget 2012)

Segregation will be turned into integration giving everyone a chance to take part in and affect the future of their city.

(Comprehensive plan 2009)

The "participatory" approach

- Fung & Wright "Empowered participatory governance":

How create deeper democratic institutions suitable for contemporary society that rely upon the commitment and capacities of ordinary people to make sensible decisions through reasoned deliberation and that tie action to discussion?

Three fundamental principles:

1) practical orientation: concrete issues generating pragmatic outcomes

2) bottom-up participation: give those affected by the issues opportunities to apply their knowledge, intelligence and interests in problem-solution

3) deliberative solution generation: not meaning that actors should not be self-interest driven, but rather that they should reason with others, listen to each other's position, decide upon group choices and accept collective actions

The "agonistic" approach

- **Chantal Mouffe**: "no amount of dialogue or moral preaching will ever convince the ruling class to give up its power"
- We need more "agonistic" politicizing of social conflicts between classes. Social democrats leap to the middle, focus on consensus have blurred the left/right political conflict.
- "dialogical" and "deliberative" efforts are instruments for the ruling elite to withhold political conflicts from politics

= mobilize the people to create agonistic democracy where the left/socialist movements can shape collective identities of the poor and the working class for radical change = stronger parties = stronger & legitimate institutions of representative democracy = emancipatory politics = social sustainability

How is "citizen-dialogue" framed and implemented?

Low institutional regulations =

high level of discretion in different tiers of implementation

The *politics of citizen participation* involves different motives and incentives among actors proposing "dialogue" as a means of governance

Motives behind "citizen dialogue" and invited participation

1) **"Democracy"**: "People must be able to speak their mind and feel that they have a voice"
2) **Efficiency**: "We must provide better services"
3) **Legitimacy**: "We need to gain more trust"
4) **Neo-liberal governmentality**: "People need to understand our situation and that everything is not possible to get. Especially not because of the future crisis in the finances of the welfare state because of the increasing costs and reduced tax-income. People must understand that we have to prioritize and they should not protest so much. Instead they need to be creative and help us solve this problem, the dialogue is *the* method."

Optimistic perspective

- In policy neither empowered nor deliberative but many initiatives strive to be and do succeed in street-level implementation
- To be developed:
- How tie discussion to action? (Many sustainable visions, rare sustainable practices)
- How include the most marginalized?
- How create a *rough* equality between different participants?

Pessimistic perspective

- Democracy and sustainability is the aims only at face level

- The hidden aims are neo-liberal governmentality striving to de-politicize unsustainable future reforms

- Maybe the agonistic model is preferable? Put efforts on social movements and strengthening critical voices within the government

Please let me know about your experiences and perspectives

THANK YOU!