Civic activism and self-organised urban development – towards hybrid governing

Participatory planning
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The civil society has changed

The ways of thinking about citizens’ roles and potentials in urban development must be updated

Application of the revised thinking in planning practices
The civil society has changed

- **Digitalization** has brought people multiple opportunities to start developing their societies directly by themselves
  - Internet + social media ➔ actor networks
- Collaborative consumption, sharing
- Ecological turn: recycling, circular economy
- Bottom-up infrastructure
- Start-up spirit, social and ethical entrepreneurship
- Disappointment with politics ➔ direct action
Activism on the rise

- From resident and consumer to multiple roles: service provider, community manager, platform manager, mediator, funder, co-creator, developer, civic designer/planner, hacktivist...
- Self-organised peer networks, usually avoiding hierarchies (at least in principle)
Civic activism on urban planning

- Social media YIMBY groups – suggestions, discussion, argumentation
- Alternative planning studies and plans – including engagement of peers
- Hacktivism – creative use of data for apps, visualizations
FB group ‘Lisää kaupunkia Helsinkiin’ – making Helsinki more urban

Based on our research the group has:

• Changed the planning context by making urbanism a phenomenon
• Helped the city planning department in implementing densification
• Enriched the planning discussion and widened the knowledge base
• Presented a new model for political action
Urban Helsinki: proposals for Hernesaari

http://www.urbanhelsinki.fi/project/hernesaari/
Three visions

● **Relationship between citizens and the government** is changing
  • Citizens take tasks the government has traditionally taken care of

● **Markets and the economy** are changing
  • Sharing/civic/platform economy: production and distribution of goods and services are changing
  • P2P services, co-owning, crowdfunding, alternative currencies...

● **Power relations and the structure of the society** are changing
  • Co-governance, shared regulation
  • Government as a partner, facilitator, or one who stays away
(Urban) Civic activism

- Self-organized, proactive and constructive co-action, typically outside of formal NGOs
- Primarily DIY-action instead of orienting towards decision making system or political engagement
  - ‘Let’s just do it!’ attitude (Pulkkinen 2014)
- Based on networking in social media and internet solutions
- People-driven bottom-up urbanism; takes place in urban space or is related to cities and urban life
Project: Civic activism as resource for the metropolis

University of Helsinki, Department of Social Research 2015–2017

- How does civic activism contribute to the development of cities? How could cities and state organizations utilise and support it?
- Focus on ecological sustainability, local innovations, local communities and civic engagement
- Advocative action research: working together with activists and authorities by identifying and solving their problems

Partners: Cities of Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, and Lahti; Ministries of Environment, Finance, and Justice; The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, The Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland, Finnish Environment Institute

Classifying civic activism

Activisms can be characterized as having qualities from one or more of the following five themes/classes:

**Services of sharing/civic/platform economy**
- P2P commerce, alternative food networks, peer renting, time banking, other P2P services

**Activism focused on community**
- Open events, local movements, social support, improving public services, ecological movements

**Shaping urban space**
- Urban planning groups, squatting, opening and shaping buildings or spaces, artivism

**Activism developing the use of technology**
- Hacktivism (civic apps, improving data systems and datasets...), developing information society (enhancing openness, digital currencies...)

**Activism supporting other activisms**
- Innovation and mediator communities, developing tools for activism, communication encouraging activism (subvertising...)
Sharing economy

Community
  - Improving public services
  - Ecological movements

Urban space
  - Squatting, opening, shaping spaces

Urban planning groups
  - Communi-cation encouraging activism

Support
  - Innovation and mediator communities
  - P2P commerce etc.

Technology
  - Hacktivism
  - Developing tools for activism

Sharing economy
  - Alternative food networks etc.

Support
  - Social support

Technology
  - Developing Information society


green: activism types that especially can make sense for enhancing ecological sustainability

Mäenpää et al. 2017
A system level view: rise of the 4th sector

- NGOs (the third sector) still important, but nowadays much of all civic action organized in other ways
- The non-NGO-based civic actors worth recognizing as the fourth sector
- But any actor can have fourth sector type of action
- Fourth sector type of action can take place between public, private and NGO sector, and blur their borders
FOURTH SECTOR
activism arises
e.g. social media group, meet-up practice, project, cooperative

THIRD SECTOR
influencing goals and practices, using an NGO for applying for funding, establishing a new NGO, competing on agency

CITIZENS
being a customer, establishing a start-up, micro or social enterprise, influencing markets
asking for information, applying for permits and grants, influencing and challenging ways to act

PRIVATE SECTOR

PUBLIC SECTOR

Simplified types of civic action

Traditional NGO type: 3rd sector
- Organization: NGO
- Social media as extra
- Influencing: through official planning and decision-making
- Meetings, statements
- Power to influence
- Partnership with city
- Representativeness
- Continuity
- Promotion of interests
- Controlled development
- Also counteraction, NIMBY

New activism type: 4th sector
- Organization: for example social media group only
- Social media essential
- Influencing: hacker attitude
- Events, action, DIY
- Sense of community
- Networking, enterprises etc.
- Openness, sharing
- Visibility
- Momentariness
- Creation of new
- Proactivity, YIMBY
Increase of fourth sector type of action can be seen as enriching democracy with **do-oocracy**

Do-oocracy: if you have an idea, you do it

https://communitywiki.org/wiki/DoOcracy

Diversified opportunities for action

⇒ opportunities for diverse people to find for themselves suitable ways to engage with and influence the society...
Resource democracy

...and ideally, at the same time, use their capacities for the common good

- resource democracy:
  democracy enriched with do-o-cracy = increased opportunities to have an influence & increased use of citizens’ resources for the common good

- Resource democracy supplements traditional representative democracy and top-down participatory processes
Civic engagement

Traditional thinking
To get engaged with the society, citizens must above all have opportunities to influence the official planning and political decision-making by the government.

Civic engagement rethought
Engagement can be created in multiple processes, through multiple roles. Opportunities to influence the official planning and decision-making are still important for many, but engagement can also arise when people help each other, provide services, contribute to their community, even fund local projects, and so on. Activisms create preconditions for the less active to get engaged as well.

Faehnle et al. 2017
Three phases of civic engagement

1.0 Governance started
- The government starts supporting civic engagement by organizing participation opportunities.
- Opportunities for good results from participation arise.

2.0 Participation increased
- More participation opportunities organized.
- Increased participation first widens opportunities for good results.
- “Overflow”: participation fatigue, dissatisfaction. Use of government’s resources questioned.

3.0 Quality and effectiveness increased
- Relation between the government and citizens rethought.
- Citizens’ action potentials and ways to support engagement understood more widely.
- Focus on quality and effectiveness of the government’s (collaborative) activities.
- Opportunities for better management and use of resources.

Faehnle et al. 2017
Supporting alternative planning

- **Timing**: make the planning task and the basic data open immediately and announce it in social media!
- **Guidance**: design the process of handling and using alternative plans and give guidance for the officials concerned
- **Common goal**: defining alternative planning and its role
- **’Support packages’** to balance opportunities for diverse citizens to co-planning
- **Give reward**: show appreciation for citizen planners e.g. in city media. Tell how their activism made sense!
- **Notice alternative plans as worth more** than ’one of the many individual views’ – take them to the planning board!
Supporting (h)acktivism

- Create **welcoming feeling**: open data, accessible formats
- ’Dogfooding’: use the data you published, show it’s valuable
- Make it **visible** that inputs and feedback are welcome
- Be **responsive**
- Share codes: **open source** software
- Appoint someone inside the government to act as the **chief liaison** for a particular activist group
Solutions enabling the rise, continuation and spreading of civic activisms

Meeting practices
- Activist officials as advocates for citizens
- ‘One point’ service as criterion for officials’ work and rewards
- Social media as officials’ tool

Crowdsourcing democracy
- New words for meeting with citizens
- Initiatives and DIY action as common good
- Participatory budgeting + crowdfunding + grants = common resourcing

Collaborative economy
- Extend Varaamo service to private spaces
- Library as builder of sharing networks
- Co-working spaces as support network for gig workers

City as a community
- Shaking the thinking about governing
- Welcoming, allowing atmosphere
- Experiments as the way to go

Activism antenna
- Social media groups as data-analyzed virtual city
- Crowdsourced mapping of resources and evaluation of their governing

Governing of self-organising city

Mäenpää & Faehnle 2017
Stairs of hybrid governing

Aktivismen ja hallinnon suhde
Förhållandet mellan aktivism och förvaltning

Aktivismen kestävä hyödyntäminen vakiintunut ja kehitetty osa hallinnon toimintaa, käytössä portaiden ylimmätkin tasot
Ett hållbart tillgodosättande av aktivism är ett etablerat och utvecklingsskapande del av förvaltningsverksamhet, och de högsta samarbetsnivåerna tillämpas

Aktivismen ja hallinnon suhteen kehittäminen
Utveckla förhållandet mellan aktivism och förvaltning på lång sikt

Yleistynyt tunnistaminen ja hyödyntäminen
Det har blivit vanligt att identifiera och tillgodogöra aktivism

Aktivismin tunnistaminen ja hallinnon tavoitteissa, voimavarojen hyvän hyödyntämisen aktivin tavoitteelu
Identifiserar aktivismit i mål-utställning, aktiv strävan efter ett tillgodogörande av resurser

Aktivismen ja voimavarojen tunnistaminen ja hyödyntämisen satunnaisesti
Slumpmässig identifiering och tillgodogörande av aktivism och resurser

Aktivismen huomioita
Ingen uppmärksamhet åt aktivismen

Yhteistoiminnan tasot
Samarbetsnivåer

8 Yhdistetty toimintajärjestelmä
Kombinerat funktionssystem

7 Jatkuva yhteistoiminta
Stadigvarande samarbete

6 Hanketyyppinen yhteistyö
Samarbete av projekttyper

5 Hallinnon tuki aktivismille
Förvaltningen stöder aktivismin

4 Vuoropuhelu aktivismin ja hallinnon välillä
Dialog mellan aktivism och förvaltning

3 Aktivisten tiedottaminen erityisesti aktivistille
Aktivt informerande åt i synnerhet aktivister

2 Aktivismin tietolähteet
Aktivismenton informationskällor

1 Aktivismin omillaan
Aktivismin i sig

8 Integrated system
7 Continuous co-action
6 Collaborative projects
5 Support for activism
4 Dialogue
3 Information targeted to activists
2 Activism as source of information
1 Activism by it’s own
Hybrid governing – urban planning

1. Alternative plans not considered
2. Social media groups as source of information
3. Informing about the basic material for planning
4. Dialogue between city planners and activists in social media groups
5. Support for alternative planning
6. Co-productio of planning material
7. Alternative plans considered by the city planning committee
8. Planning as open collaboration
Grounds for hybrid governing: Case Helsinki’s participation model

Principles of participation in binding administrative regulations:

- Utilisation of know-how and expertise of individuals and communities
- Enabling spontaneous activities
- Creation of equal opportunities for participation

https://www.hel.fi/helsinki/en/administration/participate/channels/participation-model/
Helsinki participation model - Local participation

- Local city coaches + 3 business coaches
- Local forums
- Participatory budgeting
- Shared spaces

Planning cities with self-organising citizens – key points

- Respect and use citizens as resource.
- Make civic activists feel welcome. Remember openness!
- Manage quality and efficiency of interaction and collaborative activities - long term. How does a planning process influence the collaboration capacity in the future?
- Notice the multiple roles of people and the related resources, in all stages of planning, and also in participation and evaluation plan (PAP).
- Inform citizens about the planning task immediately when possible, before PAP.
- Alternative plan is more than an individual view!
- Understand other people. Be human!
Civicactivism.fi – information bank

• Helps find ways to act so that the resources of citizens can benefit the community in a fair and sustainable way
• Knowledge, tools, ideas, visions to support above all public authorities, and also civic actors in their actions for urban development
How to get actors from all four sectors to solve complex problems together?
Publications in English


Further reading

Practical guidance

- Headd, M. 2016. How to talk to civic hackers: Strategies for engagement
- Participation Compass
  http://participationcompass.org/planning/index

Research

Welcome onboard!

Civicactivism.fi

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#kaupunkiaaktivismi

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Thank you!