# BUILDING AS A POLITICAL ACT NECESSITATES A STRUCTURED DIALOGUE

## AN APPLICATION OF HABERMAS'S COMMUNICATION THEORY

JOHANNES ALBRECHT<br>
*University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

The fact that architecture possesses a political dimension rarely reaches public awareness.[1] Whenever it does, it is mostly at a time when architecture projects a social agenda. This, however, is not the case right now. What we witness instead is that politicians, who feel in an increasing manner powerless vis-à-vis economic forces, have rediscovered the building process as a tool to put their stamp on society and leave a lasting heritage behind — the *grand projects* of French presidents, for instance. But such endeavors are not confined to the highest level of government, local politicians are active as well, are engaged, for example, in giving their cities a cultural face-lift as the widespread museum building activities, ranging from Frankfurt to Tokyo, indicate. And one must look at the neighborhood level, community projects are popular again with politicians given the rise and demands of multi-culturalism.

It is this mixture of self-promotion and cultural philanthropy on the part of politicians rather than any efforts by architects which is responsible for an increasing awareness of the political dimension of the building process. This situation represents a chance to introduce the notion of participation in design once more, this time less for the sake of promoting an ideal but to a greater degree because the formal rhetoric applied in current urban building activities appears to be more paternalistic than democratic, more populist than truly representative. Participation in design, as it has been practiced until recently, has failed for a variety of reasons (disregarding exceptions). Sometimes participation has been executed in a token manner, simply for the purpose to get a project implemented, at others, it has been turned into a polemical device for attacking assumed elitist positions. In general, it has been burdensome in getting people actively involved. But the main problem seems to have been of a structural nature. The decision making used in participation, working with compromise and the smallest common denominator, both of which are the norm in political decisions, has not been conducive for arriving at convincing design solutions. To achieve genuine understanding, a prerequisite for compelling designs, has been difficult given the marked difference in knowledge and values between participants and architects. Lastly, the more architects have been willing to live up to the

demands of participation, the more they have become mere facilitators.

Aside from these structural difficulties, there is one more problem. Writings about participatory design have focused either on justifying its use or on presenting individual projects in a case-study manner, no attempts have been made to establish a theoretical foundation for participation in architecture. What is needed are communication theories, studies in consensus building and normative concepts about communities. That is to say, theories and concepts which would help to address the structural problems inherent in participatory design, counter polemic and other misuse, and facilitate the return of social objectives. This paper will suggest that Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative competence be used as theoretical foundation for contemporary participation in design. Given the fact that Habermas' communication theory is an ideal which can only be approximated, it will be amended by a theory of a more practical nature — "social learning" by John Friedmann. Social learning emphasizes the generation of a new kind of knowledge through mutual learning processes among the participants of building endeavors.

## Theory of Communicative Competence

In order to understand Habermas' theory of communicative competence it is advisable to present first four convictions and assumptions which form the base for his communication theory. Habermas is convinced that what is commonly understood as a scientific discourse is in reality conducted similarly to a dialogue about practical matters. Normally, the scientific discourse is judged under the logical conditions of the theories that it generates. Another viewpoint can be gained if one does not examine the results of scientific discourse but its movements. But the nature of such discussions is not different from any discussion of practical questions. In both instances, decisions will be made through justification of a choice of standards. The acceptance of procedures and norms will depend on argumentation. Habermas' second conviction, also essential for his communicative theory, is that norms are not externally related to what individuals do, but that they are presupposed and anticipated in the kinds of

activity by which they achieve self-formation. In a similar way Habermas is also certain (his third conviction) that in the case of human discourse or speech, presupposition and anticipation exist. In this instance, an "ideal speech situation" guaranteeing unconstrained communication is presupposed and anticipated. Additionally, he is convinced that an ideal form of life emphasizing autonomy and responsibility has a prior form in the structure of speech. Habermas' fourth conviction is that in every speech act, the *telos* of reaching an understanding is inherent. Habermas draws here on Wittgenstein's postulate that in the concept of language lies the concept of reaching an understanding. Interpreting Freud's work, Habermas is of the opinion that psychoanalysis as a theory of and therapy for systematically distorted communication necessarily presupposes a general theory of non-distorted communication. A reflective understanding of language is the key for unlocking false consciousness.

In his theory of communicative competence, Habermas draws a theoretical distinction between communicative action and communicative discourse. The former course occurs when a background consensus is acknowledged or assumed, the latter is necessary when this background consensus is questioned. Habermas, of course, knows that the distinction between communicative action and communicative discourse is artificial and not in accord with reality. But this differentiation provides a clearer concept of action and argumentation. Every communicative action rests on a background consensus formed from the mutual recognition of at least four claims to validity which are implied in all acts of speech: the comprehensibility of the utterance; the truth of its propositional component; the correctness and appropriateness of its performatory component; and, the authenticity of the speaking subject.

In the daily occurrence of communicative action, these four claims to validity are not questioned. But when one or more such claims become problematic, the background consensus is called into question and the claims, previously only implicit, now require specific forms of problem resolution. These solutions are different for each type of claim. The claim to comprehensibility must be factually redeemed in the course of further interaction. The claim to authenticity can likewise be redeemed by further interaction. The claim to authenticity can likewise be redeemed by further interaction since it will become apparent, whether the participant is really willing to cooperate or merely pretending to communicate while in reality behaving strategically. The situation, however, is different with regard to the claim to the truth of utterances and to the correctness of norms. In both instances the claim to validity can only be proved in discourse; and that demands a break in the normal action continuum, that is to say, it requires an elimination of all hindrances of action and of all motives except that of a readiness to come to an understanding.

The claim to truth and the claim to correctness require discursive justification. But consensus cannot be used as the criterion of truth if every contingently reached agreement were to be considered as consensus. Truth is not the fact that a consensus is realized, but rather the

possibility that if we engage in discourse a consensus can be achieved under conditions which identify this as a true consensus. This poses the question, what are the conditions for such a consensus and what are the criteria to distinguish a true (rational) from a false (accepted) consensus? Habermas claims that there are no definite criteria which can distinguish a rational consensus from one which is not. We have no criteria which would not itself require discursive justification; we have only recourse to argumentation itself. But if the relevant criteria can only be justified discursively then a vicious circle seems imminent. At this juncture Habermas introduces the notion of an "ideal speech act" and argues that it is both presupposed and anticipated in every normal act of speech. "The design of an ideal speech situation is necessarily implied in the structure of potential speech, since all speech, even intentional deception, is oriented toward the idea of truth."

Basic to an ideal speech act is the demand that only the force of the better argument should be accepted, that an argument should rationally motivate the participants to accept a claim to truth. The force of the better argument, however, demands the exclusion of any constraints on discussion and of any ideological distortions. A situation free from constraints is given when all participants are assured of a symmetrical chance to select and employ speech acts and to assume in a similar manner dialogue roles.

A few observations about the requirements of the ideal speech situation must be added. It would be very unwise to expect that the conditions of ideal speech can be fulfilled in any case of actual speech. Space-time and psychological limitations alone would make it very difficult to realize such an ideal. These obstacles, however, do not render this idea useless. On the contrary, it can serve as a model to be more or less approximated in actual speech, as a guide for institutionalization of discourse and, finally, as a yardstick for the critique of distorted communication. Habermas admits that it is not possible to prove empirically the extent to which the conditions of the ideal speech act are realized in a particular instance. According to him, the ideal speech situation is neither an empirical phenomenon nor a concept, but a reciprocal supposition necessary for discourse. This explains why Habermas speaks of an anticipation of an ideal speech situation which, in turn, includes the conviction that the structure of communication rests on a normative base. This line of reasoning is underlined by Habermas' insistence upon seeing the conditions of ideal speech linked to conditions for an ideal form of life. Ideas of freedom and justice have their bearing on claims to truth. The idea of an ideal form of life requires social institutions and practices which permit free, symmetrical and unconstrained discourse, and it is through such a discourse that the ideal form of life expresses itself.

In summary, Habermas's theory of communicative competence rests on the assumption that human discourse presupposes and anticipates an ideal speech situation which, in turn, is connected to an ideal form of life: truth cannot be separated from freedom and justice. Habermas's theory further assumes that reaching an understanding is inherent in language. Both assumptions account for the

normative foundation of his theory. The objective of communicative competence is to further autonomy and responsibility.

Fundamental to the theory of communicative competence is the theoretical distinction between communicative action and communicative discourse. The former is the norm as long as a background consensus, formed by mutual recognition of four validity claims, is guaranteed. In the instance that one or more of these claims is doubted, specific solutions are demanded. In the case of the claims to comprehensibility and veracity, only further interaction is necessary. With regard to the other two claims — the claim to truth and the claim to correctness — a break in the action-continuum is required, for they demand discursive justification. The criterion for such justification and any consensus is the ideal speech situation. Ideal speech is that form of discourse in which only the compulsion of argumentation exists and in which a genuine symmetry among all participants permits a complete interchangeability of role-taking. The power of ideal speech is the power of argumentation itself. Regardless of the fact that the conditions of ideal speech can hardly be fulfilled, its model function is crucial. It is the only profound way of criticizing common discourse and any form of distorted communication. We, therefore, should adhere to the idea of free, symmetrical and unconstrained discourse. The acceptance of such a discourse would prevent that decisions be made strictly in the interest of the powerful and at the cost of the underprivileged. Decision-making executed in this manner would become egalitarian and truly democratic. Communicative competence among citizens would permit the recognition of distorted communication which is responsible for manipulation and ideological indoctrination.

It appears useful to amend Habermas's communication theory with a concept that has been developed with practical application in mind. While John Friedmann's notion of social learning has been used in planning, its lessons are applicable to participation in design as well.[3]

## Social Learning

In the opinion of Friedmann, barriers to effective communication are caused by the fact that planners have access primarily to processed knowledge which differs from their client's knowledge. Planners use knowledge abstracted from the social world and manipulated by scientific theory and method, while clients work with personal knowledge drawn directly from experience. The difficulties of relating these two ways of knowing (rational vs. experience-based) on each other are not only created by their different objectives and degrees of practicality but also by language. The planner's language is formalized, conceptual, and mathematical, enabling others to verify each statement in terms of its logic, consistency with empirical observation, and theoretical coherence;[4] whereas, the language of clients is tied to specific operational contexts, shifting its meaning with changes in the context. Even when the latter encompasses congeries of facts and events that form a meaningful

whole in terms of practice, it is clearly distinct from the language of planning as the facts and events are unrelated at the level of theory. If the communication gap between planners and clients is to be closed, according to Friedmann, continuous personal and verbal transaction between the two is necessary. This would assure that processed knowledge is fused with personal knowledge and that both are fused with action through an unbroken sequence of interpersonal relations. But effective communication is not simply a matter of transforming the abstract and formalized language of planning into the less complicated and more experience-based language of clients. The real solution asks for a restructuring of the relationship between planners and clients.

This new relationship between planners and clients exists in "transactive" planning, which integrates processes of mutual learning. Planners and clients learn from each other; planners from the personal knowledge of the clients, clients from the planners' technical expertise. In this process, the knowledge of both is altered. As perceptions and images are changed, so is the behavior that results from them: the ideas of the learner take root, become transformed, and generate action, thereby intervening in and affecting the behavior of society. However, dialogue is essential to learning; through dialogue, mutual learning occurs and through mutual learning, changes are brought about in the collective behavior of society.

Dialogue, in Friedmann's concept, accepts the "otherness" of people. It presumes a relation in which thinking, moral judgement, feeling, and empathy merge in authentic acts of being; that is, total communication is the ideal in mutual learning. But this kind of dialogue also presumes not only a relationship in which conflict is accepted, but a relationship of reciprocity, mutual obligation, and commitment, and, finally, a sense of partaking in the interests of others. Such a dialogue is clearly different from the way normal relationships are viewed in contemporary work-life. Here, relationships are expected to be founded on a professional basis; to be centered on specific roles, rather than on persons, and to be a form of behavior that consciously separates intellectual and technical contributions from moral judgements and feelings. It is assumed that, in these relationships, transactions are guided by purely utilitarian considerations.

Friedmann admits that one cannot maintain deep personal relationships with everyone contacted, but, in his opinion, a person-centered relationship can be sustained and is the prerequisite for a learning society. Transactive planning is, thus, a style of planning that humanizes the acquisition and use of scientific and technical knowledge.

One could argue that communication barriers between architects and their clients are not as critical as they are in the planning-client relationship. This appears to be true at first glance, after all the knowledge used in architecture is not exactly like the knowledge applied in planning, and, furthermore, architecture is not fully aligned with the realm of science and engineering. But this is changing since a substantial segment of architecture is

191

moving closer to these two realms due to a trend towards ever larger firms and due to competition with new professions in the building sector. The most obvious results of this trend and such competition are internal technocratization and rationalization processes that have occurred in many firms and that have changed previous ways of producing architecture.[5] Considered, too, must be the increasing complexity of building programs which has led to a sharp rise in technological as well as structural issues. In the case of participatory design, knowledge from the behavioral sciences has become an important factor. As a result of these developments, it appears fair to say that a large percentage of the knowledge used in architecture is of a processed nature and different from the knowledge of clients, which is integral to the concrete circumstances of life. Even more difficult for clients to understand is the language of architecture or architecture as language — architecture has turned into an autonomous self-referential discourse, at least one segment of it.[6]

Traditionally, architects dealt with a single client who quite often had the same socio-economic background, in this instance "conversations" seemed to be adequate. At present, the single client situation has become the exception; therefore, and for the reasons outlined above, a new relationship between architects and clients is necessary.[7] This is particularly true in the case of participatory design. Friedmann's concept suggests that the new relationship should be based on processes of mutual learning, which means the current method in architecture of artful persuasion is no longer practicable. The suggestion sounds simple, but the critical point is that a new kind of knowledge, created by the fusion of technical with experience-based or personal knowledge, should be generated in the learning process.[8]

In order to achieve this, a dialogue is essential that accepts otherness and postulates a relation in which thinking, moral judgement, feeling, and empathy coalesce. This differs from the prevailing relationship between architects and clients which is based on role behavior that excludes ethical concern and de-emphasizes feeling and empathy. Full acceptance and inclusion of these three aspects would certainly pose a challenge to conventional manners of operation. It would counter the strong focus on technical problems in communications between architects and clients by putting these problems in non-material perspective. The described learning process could alter preconceived perceptions and images held by both sides and, thus, prepare the way for constructive change, and the necessary commitment for such change might well be assured by the requirement to establish reciprocity.[9] In this fashion, controlled change, which often has eluded participatory design, could take place. To conclude, the application of Friedmann's dialogue and concept of mutual learning could be a first step toward an environment which is meaningful for communities and respects, and furthers their identity.

This conclusion needs to be amended as the parameters of participatory design are not of a singular nature. It is quite conceivable that the fusion of technical and processed with experience-based and personal knowledge will occur in the learning process. More questionable seems to be the possibility to conduct a dialogue about aspects of form and their meaning beyond tokenism given the lack of interest and sophistication in such issues on the part of the general public.

This problem is compounded by the current tendency to use formal and stylistic references in such a way that only initiates understand the "message," which is even the case when elements of the vernacular are applied. The lack of interest and sophistication in environmental sensibility is an astonishing fact if one examines other cultures or if one recalls earlier periods of Western history. For instance, medieval townscapes (e.g., Siena) were based on communal decision making that required a high degree of aesthetic sophistication from the citizenry.

What we witness now is cultural regression. Given the fact that general education, apart from being mandatory, attempts to be all-encompassing, it is inexcusable that environmental evaluation is not included in most school curricula. Since education is failing, the burden rests solely on the participating process. Taking into account the specific characteristics of Friedmann's dialogue and learning process, one can argue that with great willingness on both sides (which is a necessary prerequisite in Friedmann's concepts anyway) a degree of awareness could be achieved that precludes current low-level compromises in participatory design. It should be evident that the learning process must deal with issues of a formalistic and symbolic nature, that architects must accept this particular responsibility if participatory is to remain a valid idea; only then will the intended messages reach a wider audience and thus become meaningful, which so far they have not been.

As a closing point, a problem must be mentioned which is perhaps fundamental and certainly in need of theoretical investigations, that is, the seeming incompatibility between the idea of participation and the manner in which the creative process works, irrespective of which dialogue concept is in use. In addition, if one agrees that authority is an essential feature of any profession and, indeed, its source of societal power then another problem arises. According to Hanna Arendt, authority in the traditional sense is incompatible with processes of argumentation which, in her opinion, presupposes equality.[10] Against the egalitarian order stands the authoritative order, she declares, and if authority can be defined at all, then it must be in opposition to argumentation.

This situation necessitates first a closer look at Arendt's definition of authority. Presumably Arendt has either a patriarchal situation in mind or a condition in which authority is sanctified by religious or mythical systems — not a situation that is political and social in the modern secular sense. Furthermore, not only is equality a constitutionally guaranteed aspect of every Western society, but it would seem that an authority that circumvents equality is ultimately an unjust one or becomes one even if it has benign origins. It would use controlling mechanisms which could range from coercive to normative. Hence an inegalitarian authority would, as a minimum, use the norms of a privileged class or a privileged position. Critical theory argues sharply against any privileged status for authority and norms, both cannot operate outside the realm of argumentation and

discourse.[11] A theory of participation in architecture must include the notion of authority; so far the practice in participatory design has been to see authority as a remnant of elitist circumstances and therefore declare it as unacceptable. But architecture as a profession cannot function without authority, it has a right to claim sincere understanding of its *metier*, and it is this understanding which legitimizes the authority of architecture — authority comes form being a conscious and knowing actor with a commitment.[12] And architecture is an activity where principles must be adhered to (unprincipled and relativistic compromises severely handicap participatory design). What is important is that the architecture principles in use cannot be of an absolute nature, they must be arrived at in open discourse, and so must architecture's understanding of its *metier* and the human condition. The power of architecture indeed can only come from convincing argumentation and not from claiming to be a privileged social institution. It should be self-evident that the authority proposed for participatory design has nothing to do with role-behavior, in Arendt's concept of authority the affected must closely follow their assigned roles. Given the general lack of environmental sophistication, there is the danger, though, that the architectural authority necessary in participatory design could take on an unquestioned status.

While the knowledge part of authority can be brought into the dialogue and learning process, it is doubtful whether the other part of architecture's authority, its creative capacity, can be included in such a process to a similar degree. It is conceivable that by stressing empathy, which is an essential feature of the proposed dialogue concept, creative results can be comprehended. To expect the same with regard to creative decision making itself is, however, unrealistic. The creative act, most of the time, is never a complete rational process, not even in architecture which admittedly has a large problem-solving component. To apply democratic decision-making — a variety of design solutions are up for vote — to the design process as has been done by proponents of participatory design, would make a mockery of the creative act and thus of architecture.[13]

Creative authority does not derive from argumentation; it comes from the creative act itself; in this sense, one could argue that creative authority is similar to Arendt's definition of authority. Could it be that the moment creativity comes into play that the limits of participatory design, or rather of democratic processes, become apparent? With the advent of pluralism, a new democratic understanding arrived as well, there is now the unbridled expectation that democratic processes should be invoked in all aspects of life. This expectation is naive, it also implies the idea that the political principle — equality — can be transferred to all human endeavors.[14] Since participatory design is to a large degree a political act and situation, it is clear that the notion of equality must be upheld in this kind of design, but since participatory design is also a creative act, it is equally clear that equality and argumentation cannot be applied in the same manner to all of its activities.

One possible answer to this dilemma could be to distinguish between complete participation in functional matters and partial participation in formgiving processes.

Unfortunately, this would entail a questionable separation of form and function with the result that form becomes a mere afterthought to function again. Lucien Kroll approaches this problem somewhat differently.[15] First, it should be stated though, that in the opinion of Kroll, the new task of participatory design lies in rehabilitation, restructuring, and redesigning. Believing that this should not only be a physical but a social issue as well, he views architectural intervention as a means towards social transformation and development. Thus he is not interested in "prettifying" existing buildings, but more in changing their underlying symbolism, the aim is to "disfigure the object to discredit the bureaucratic [and developmental] paternalism."

To this end, he uses vernacular or local materials and forms selected with full participation by the inhabitants. Then Kroll designs exemplary architectural intervention, whose assemblage possesses an ad hoc quality that resembles incremental growth and whose consciously improvised character aims at stimulating the inhabitants to do likewise. In other words, Kroll designs an architectural vocabulary which can be appropriated by the people; through appropriation, imitation, and transformation creative instincts are set free leading to a creative learning process. In this manner, the creative authority of both the architect and the inhabitants is upheld and a degree of equality established. Participatory design along these lines would mean that the architect designs examples or important parts of the project while the participants do the rest in an additive and infill manner. The project would become a collage, not without a guiding idea, that could undergo change and therefore remain a structure adaptable to varying circumstances — participatory design as an ongoing process and intervention. Participatory design, this way, would make collective experience of architecture possible again.

The remarks made about the problems a theory of participation in architecture may have with both authority and equality are, at this point, not definitive and so are the indicated answers. Nonetheless, it appears that a theory of participation could be construed, especially given the fact that the other problems participatory design is encountering could, very likely, be rectified by borrowing from humanistic planning theories.[16]

## NOTES

[1] I am writing this paper under protest since the initially announced deadline for paper submittal (when the call for papers was issued) was May 15. Upon notification of paper acceptance the May deadline was moved forward to April 1. Given the drastically shortened time, I am in no position to write the paper as intended.

[2] J. Habermas, "Systematically Distorted Communication," in P. Connerton, *Critical Sociology* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976). J. Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979).

[3] For theories termed social learning, see E. S. Dunn, *Economic and Social Development: A Process of Social Learning* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1971); J. Friedmann, "Notes on Societal Action," in *Journal of the American Institute of Plan-*

*ners*, Vol. 35, No. 5, (1969), pp. 311-18; *Retracking America: A Theory of Transactive Planning* (New York: Doubleday, 1973); "Knowledge and Action: A Guide to Planning Theory." in *Journal of the American Institute of Planners,* Vol. 40, No. 1, (1974), pp. 2-16; D. Goldschalk, ed., *Planning in America: Learning from Turbulence* (Washington, DC: American Institute of Planners, 1974); and D. Michael, *On Learning to Plan and Planning to Learn* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1973).

4 That the language and discourse of planners is also an exceedingly well camouflaged source of power can be discerned from a stinging and Foucault-like analysis of planning by M. C. Boyer, *Dreaming the Rational City: The Myth of American City Planning* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983). An extreme case is medicine where the deliberate obscurity of the professional discourse legitimizes and reinforces authority; see Foucault's book, *The Birth of Clinical Medicine.*

5 R. J. Blau, *Architects and Firms: a Sociological Perspective on Architectural Practice* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984).

6 Robert Gutman recommends to distinguish between the "profession" and the "discipline;" the latter consists of practicing academicians. It is the discipline which indulges in self-referential exercises which no longer can even be followed by mainstream professionals, e.g., the introduction of "deconstruction" into architecture.

7 This new relationship can obviously not be extended to those situations where the design activity aims at the anonymous market (which is a growing phenomenon).

8 For a thorough treatment of the antagonism between *techne* and *praxis*, see R. J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983).

9 Friedmann appears to concur with Habermas on the importance of the notion of "reciprocity."

10 H. Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: The Viking Press, 1976).

11 J. Habermas demands that normative power be replaced by reflective power.

12 This understanding needs to be distinguished from expertise based on problem-solving methods so popular with technocrats.

13 Charles Moore promoted such voting practices; but he was quite ready to admit that in the case of the Kresge College he made major design decisions when faculty and students were on semester break. Democratic decision making has been used in the theater in the aftermath of the sixties, a phenomenon which has all but disappeared. One also could argue that, in this instance, it was not so much a creative but an interpretative situation.

14 It may also be useful to remember Tocqueville's statement that democracy is only the least problematic choice of all the alternatives of governing available to us.

15 T. Schuman, "Participation, Empowerment, and Urbanism." in *Proceedings of the 75th Annual ACSA Meeting* (Washington D.C.: ACSA Press, 1987.

16 Notice should be served that neo-conservative political scientists ask for a revision of the classical theory of citizen participation in democratic theory and state that the participatory role of the population rests on empirically unrealistic foundations. For instance, Robert Dahl claims that the average citizen is apathetic and subject to authoritarian values. He therefore concludes that broadly based citizen involvement can be risky and is socially unacceptable. Others arrive at similar conclusions by saying that the norms and values of democracy have been established and are maintained by minorities without the aid of a passive majority. If they were to become active, they would pose a threat to the existing consensus on norms and values. In this sense, their participation would become potentially dangerous. Instead of soliciting their activity, their role should be confined to choosing representatives from highly motivated elites. According to this view, citizen participation has only a limited function in society.

194