

MSc Urban Planning and Management  
Aalborg University  
Master's Thesis  
June 2011

# ETHICS, VALUES AND THE ROLE OF PLANNERS IN ENGAGING THEIR COMMUNITIES



## EVIDENCE FROM PLANNERS IN COLORADO

Marine Siohan



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**Title:**

Ethics, Values and the Role of Planners in Engaging their Communities - Evidence from Planners in Colorado

**Degree:**

MSc Urban Planning and Management  
Aalborg University, Denmark

**Project period:**

September 2010 – June 2011  
Master's Long Thesis

**Author:**

Marine Siohan

**Project group no.:**

upm4-2011-5

**Supervisor:**

Carsten Jahn Hansen

**Page number (excluding appendices):**

95

**Appendices page number (attached on a CD):**

104

**Copies:**

3

**Cover picture:**

Denver, Colorado  
Retrieved April 26, 2011, from  
<http://spanishandillinois.blogspot.com/>

## Synopsis

In the context of rapidly evolving societies, public participation in public affairs and more particularly in urban planning has become a guiding principle for renewed governance. Planners who are in charge of implementing public involvement strategies in practice are on the front line for finding efficient and satisfactory ways to do so. Their professional activity demands that they make critical choices and ethical judgments in regard to citizens and stakeholders who participate in the process and the space given to them in the debate. This project looks into the ethical and moral values guiding planners into the engagement of their communities in public planning.

The main evidence base was created during a series of interviews with planners in Colorado, USA, between January and April 2011, in order to address the research question formulated in this report. This led to identifying a set of seven ethical and moral value themes, which planners who actively engage in collaborative planning might rely on: working for the public good; advancing fairness and justice; focusing on the right decision-making process; engaging in an open conversation; being accountable to the public; caring about the transparency of the decision-making process; being dedicated and optimistic.

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## Preface

This project lies within the framework of the Master of Science in Urban Planning and Management of Aalborg University, Denmark. It represents the concluding piece of work of this two-year program, the 'Master's Long Thesis' report, and was carried on between September 2010 and June 2011.

The broad theme of this research concerns public participation and community engagement practices in urban planning. Rather than concentrating on techniques and processes associated to them, the emphasis is placed on the human aspects of planning practices and on the point of view of municipal planning practitioners. In fact, as a student trained to be a planner, it seems interesting to aim at adding practical knowledge to the theoretical reading and learning gained from the lectures and seminars attended during the first year of the program. This represents a way to learn from planners' experiences and understand what is important when practicing planning.

The research is placed in the context of urban planning in Colorado, USA. Four professional planners working for state or municipal public agencies have been interviewed for this project.

I am sincerely grateful to the planners I have interviewed, for their availability, time, contribution, enthusiasm and encouragements:

- Mrs. Jill Locantore, senior planner at the Denver Regional Council of Governments;
- Mrs. Jean Gatzka, sustainability planner at the City of Boulder;
- Mr. Steve Glueck, planning and development director at the City of Golden;
- Mr. Rich Muzzy, environmental program manager at the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Carsten Jahn Hansen, who supported me with fruitful inputs and guided me in the writing of this report. Finally, special thanks to Tim Richardson, professor in the department of Development and Planning, who helped me launch this project.



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## List of acronyms and abbreviations

AICP	American Institute of Certified Planners
AMPO	Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations
App.	Appendix
COG	Council of Governments
Com Plan	Comprehensive Plan
CRS	Colorado Revised Statutes
DRCOG	Denver Regional Council of Governments
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
NFRMPO	North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization
PACOG	Pueblo Area Council of Governments MPO and Transportation Planning Region
PPACG	Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments
RPO	Regional Planning Organization
US DOT	US Department of Transportation

# 1 Introduction

“Planning is collective action for the common good, but particularly action that concentrates on building and shaping the shared physical infrastructure for present needs and future growth. Although planning necessarily looks beyond city boundaries, its main tasks historically have been creating an urban infrastructure and linking cities to the rural hinterland” (Fishman 2000, p. 2).

Through the above quote, Fishman (2000) proposes a definition of urban planning on which his book, *The American Planning Tradition*, is launched. This definition raises a number of questions: how to evaluate ‘present needs and future growth’? How is the ‘common good’ defined and by whom? What is ‘collective action’ and whom does it encompass? The theme of this project relates to an aspect of ‘collective action’: public participation and community engagement practices in urban planning. The following section introduces its more specific topics and details the reasoning that leads to the problem formulation or research challenge of the study.

## 1.1 Problem formulation

Although the northern American continent has largely been populated by European settlers since the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the American planning tradition that has shaped US cities is radically different from the various European planning traditions. In fact, as far as physical planning and urban street layout are concerned, the American cities are characterized by the famous grid plans that represent the most efficient way to use land, according to Fishman (2000, p. 2). In regard to private property rights, while European countries have inherited from feudalistic systems where the most valuable land was owned by the elite, in the US freedom of property prevailed and even the poorest could access property. These differences can be explained in part by the opposite governance systems that were in place on both sides of the Atlantic: in Europe the very centralized states exercised their power at all levels of society and geographical scales; in the US the absence of strong national state might have caused messy situations but gave leeway to the cities and their citizens, giving rise to what probably best describes the American planning tradition: pluralism. (Fishman 2000) Alexis de Tocqueville, describing his arrival from France on the American continent in his book *Democracy in America*, already described this messy pluralism of US cities but recognized that it resulted in a surprising amount of collective action for public good outside of any bureaucratic hierarchy:

“Everything is in motion around you: here, the people of one quarter of a town are met to decide on the building of a church; there, the election of a representative is going on; a little further, the delegates of a district are posting to town in order to consult some local improvements; in another place, the laborers of a village quit their plows to deliberate on the project of a road or a public school” (de Tocqueville, 1835 & 1840 in Fishman, 2000, p. 4).

As Fishman (2000) argues, American planning is still today the realm of a plurality of actors, including the public – as “action always requires extensive public discussion and alliance-building rather than simply a fiat from an all-powerful government” – and the property owners – as “the deep regard for private property has often strengthened planning by forcing activists to better define the benefits of collective action” (p. 5). This raises questions on the role played by public planning agencies in the debate, and more specifically on the space occupied by planners working for these agencies within this plurality of actors: how do they relate to the different stakeholders? How can the public be part of public planning and action? Do planners have a role to play in engaging communities? What is that role? Thus, it could be anticipated that the plurality of actors that characterizes the American planning tradition places the planner in a different position compared to the more structured European planning systems.

On a local level, the region of Denver, Colorado, makes no exception to this tradition of pluralism in American planning. In addition to diverse private interests and advocacy groups and the many local jurisdictions that are the counties and municipalities, there are 14 regional planning councils across the state. The Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) and the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG, grouping 3 counties around Colorado Springs) are two of them and will be more closely looked at in this project, along with Boulder and Golden municipalities. Furthermore, according to Murray (2002), the planning and development governance systems are weakened by the fact that regional planning councils do not have enough power in policy implementation over the various stakeholders (p. 287), as for example in the Denver metropolitan region:

“The existing system of regional governance in the Denver metropolitan area is comprised of a variety of independent, single purpose districts and authorities providing services on a regional basis in the areas of wastewater treatment, drainage and flood control, transportation, cultural facilities, air quality, sports facilities and water. The only multi-functional agency, DRCOG, though it includes most of the region’s local governments as members and provides important services, is fundamentally a voluntary agency whose plans and recommendations are not binding on local governments, special districts or other regional agencies. [...] An integrated regional governance structure is needed to improve cooperation and collaboration on regional issues” (The Metro Forum, 1991 in Murray, 2002, p. 287).

Therefore, in addition to addressing the key planning and development perspectives of growth management (coping with the high increase of population while limiting the impact of urban sprawl), downtown revitalization, transportation and brownfield development, the Denver region has to address the need of regional collaborative planning (Murray, 2002, p. 287).

Patsy Healey’s book *Collaborative Planning: Shaping Place in Fragmented Societies* that was first published in 1997 (the second edition dates from 2006) contributed to emphasizing the importance of collaborative planning in the theoretical debate. In her book, Healey “develops a communicative approach to the design of governance systems and practices, focusing on ways of fostering collaborative, consensus-building practices” while taking “as a normative position an ethical commitment to enabling all stakeholders to have a voice” (Healey, 2006, p. 5). The emphasis is on involving a wide range of stakeholders in the decision-making process through the use of diverse

methods that are adapted to their audience. While Healey concentrates on governance processes, other planning theorists from the communicative action paradigm have focused on studying planning practices while “see[ing] planning as an interactive, communicative activity and depict[ing] planners as deeply embedded in the fabric of community, politics, and public decision-making” (Innes, 1995, p. 183). These planning theories have taken a significant space in the debate in the last decade; in parallel stakeholder involvement and public participation have become somewhat of ‘buzz words’ in the public and political discourses, as practical tools for effective decision-making processes and means to counteract the crisis of representative democracy. Brody & al. (2003), through a review of the literature on the topic, remind us of some of the arguments in favor of public participation:

- The “principles [of public participation] include the rights of individuals to be informed, to be consulted, and to have the opportunity to express their views on governmental decisions. They also stress the need for better representation of the interests of disadvantaged and powerless groups in governmental decision-making” (Arnstein, 1969, Burke, 1979, Day, 1997, Fainstein & Fainstein, 1985, Godschalk & Mills, 1966 in Brody & al., 2003, p. 246).
- “Citizen participation can generate trust, credibility, and commitment regarding the implementation of policies and can build social capital” (Burby, 2003, Innes, 1996, Innes & al., 1994 in Brody & al., 2003, p. 246).
- “Including key parties ‘early, often and on-going’ can create a sense of ownership over a plan’s content and can reduce potential conflict over the long term, because those involved feel responsible for its policies” (Creighton, 2002, Wondelleck & Yafee, 2000 in Brody & al., 2003, p. 246).
- “Furthermore, organizations and individual participants bring valuable knowledge and innovative ideas about their community that can increase the quality of adopted plans” (Forester, 1999, Moore, 1995 in Brody & al., 2003, p. 246).
- “The results can be more equitable and enduring solutions, which help to ensure that the interests of stakeholders are protected over the long term” (Godschalk & al., 1994 in Brody & al., 2003, p. 246).

In view of this line of arguments, it seems difficult not to believe that public participation in planning decision-making is a progress towards more democracy and something we should aim for. In fact, even though the debate about its practicalities and extents is still heated, there is a relative consensus about its necessity, as for example listed in the state of Colorado’s Revised Statutes: “the general assembly declares that public participation in government produces better government” (CRS, 2010, 24-3.5-101). However, this declaration is accompanied by very minimalist legal requirements about public participation being limited to the conduction of public hearings by the local planning commissions (see for example CRS, 2010, 31-23-206). What can be seen as a contradiction is actually not rare, as “most current language still reflects the obsolete ‘notice and hearing’ approach from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century” (Brody & al., 2003, p. 260). In order to achieve broader and more effective citizen involvement in plan making, Brody & al. (2003) advise that these requirements are rewritten using both coercion and persuasion measures. However, this is not up to local planning practitioners to decide, and they should still find way to foster effective public participation in their jurisdictions.

Therefore, Brody & al. (2003) highlight for their attention that “it is possible to overcome problems of citizen apathy and disinterest in the planning process by crafting lively and engaging participation programs” (pp. 260-261); local planners must make the six following interrelated critical choices when designing participation programs, and the way they do so has a direct impact on the level of public involvement actually attained:

- They must decide whether they want to prepare a participation plan and allocate specific staff resources to carry it out;
- They must decide what the objectives of such plan should be in regard to citizens, from educating them to allowing them some influence on the content of the plan;
- They must decide when to engage the public in the process;
- They must decide who to engage (which stakeholder groups);
- They must decide what types of participation techniques to use (for example public hearings, workshops, surveys);
- Finally they must decide what type of information to provide to the public along with the information channels that they want to use. (Brody & al., 2003)

By proposing such framework, Brody & al. (2003) enable us to evaluate how much importance and impact local planners can have on public participation programs; we begin to perceive that planners have a specific role to play in regard to citizen involvement. And because planning is not an exact science, planners can choose the way they want to practice it and frame their role. However, there is no mention of the basis on which these choices should be made: should the planners necessarily aim at greater citizen involvement in plan making? Who should and how to evaluate if a public participation program is a failure or a success? Is it only related to the number of stakeholder groups that were involved? Should planners listen to the majority's voice, or should they give more attention to the minorities? Can the public decide what is good for them, or do planners possess the knowledge that enables them to decide what is good or not for the public? Is there a difference between what planners must do and what planners ought to do? Furthermore, public participation practicalities can sometimes be associated with difficulties or disadvantages such as the facts that these processes are resource consuming or that the decision-making process can be longer. In any case, they represent a whole range of challenges for planners to address, especially in the context of American planning being less formal and rigid than the European planning systems.

These challenges inevitably raise issues of ethics in the practice of planning. In fact, as Forester (1999) claims, “planners are practical ethicists; their jobs demand that they make ethical judgments – judgments of good and bad, more valued and less valued, more significant and less – continually as they work” (pp. 31-32). Ethical choices are therefore at the heart of daily planning practices. Pløger (2004) adds to ethics the dimension of morality, defining it as “the way the world ought to be and what we ought to do [and] principles that most certainly will guide professional planners' everyday practice if the person is in any way committed to public planning” (p. 50). Due to the fact that ethics and moral are embedded in the daily practices of planners, it is fundamental that research about planning is concerned about “which ethical values planners value or prefer, and what ethics is to planners as subjects and as civil servants” (Pløger, 2004, p. 49): on which basis do planners make decisions in their professional activities? What should a planner do to act ‘well’? Are planners conscious and transparent about the moral principles that guide their action? How do they morally position themselves in regard to the public, the elected officials, the society?



This project represents an attempt to add to the debate and challenges set by this series of questions, by focusing on the ethical and moral values of planners. We have shown that public participation has become a very important factor in planning practice. Furthermore, due to the fact that regulation about citizen involvement is often minimalist or even sometimes obsolete, planners have much leeway when designing participation programs. They have to make critical choices according to their personal ethics and moral. Therefore, the research question of this project can be formulated as follows:

**What are the ethical and moral values  
on which planners rely to frame their role  
and engage their communities in public planning?**

In fact, in view of the importance that public participation and community engagement have taken in the political and planning discourses in the recent years, it seems legitimate to choose the topic as a focus of research, and to try to reveal what it entails for those who are dealing with it on a daily basis. Since public participation is commonly advocated as a good governance practice, it is interesting to learn about the aspects it relies on, such as the ethical and moral values of planners in charge of implementing citizen engagement strategies in their communities. As explained earlier, an American context has been chosen for this project. Qualitative interviews of four planners in Colorado constitute the main source of evidence on which the research question will be answered. The project findings, supported by the research methodology and relevant theoretical framework, are presented in this report. The following section guides the reader into the structure of this report.

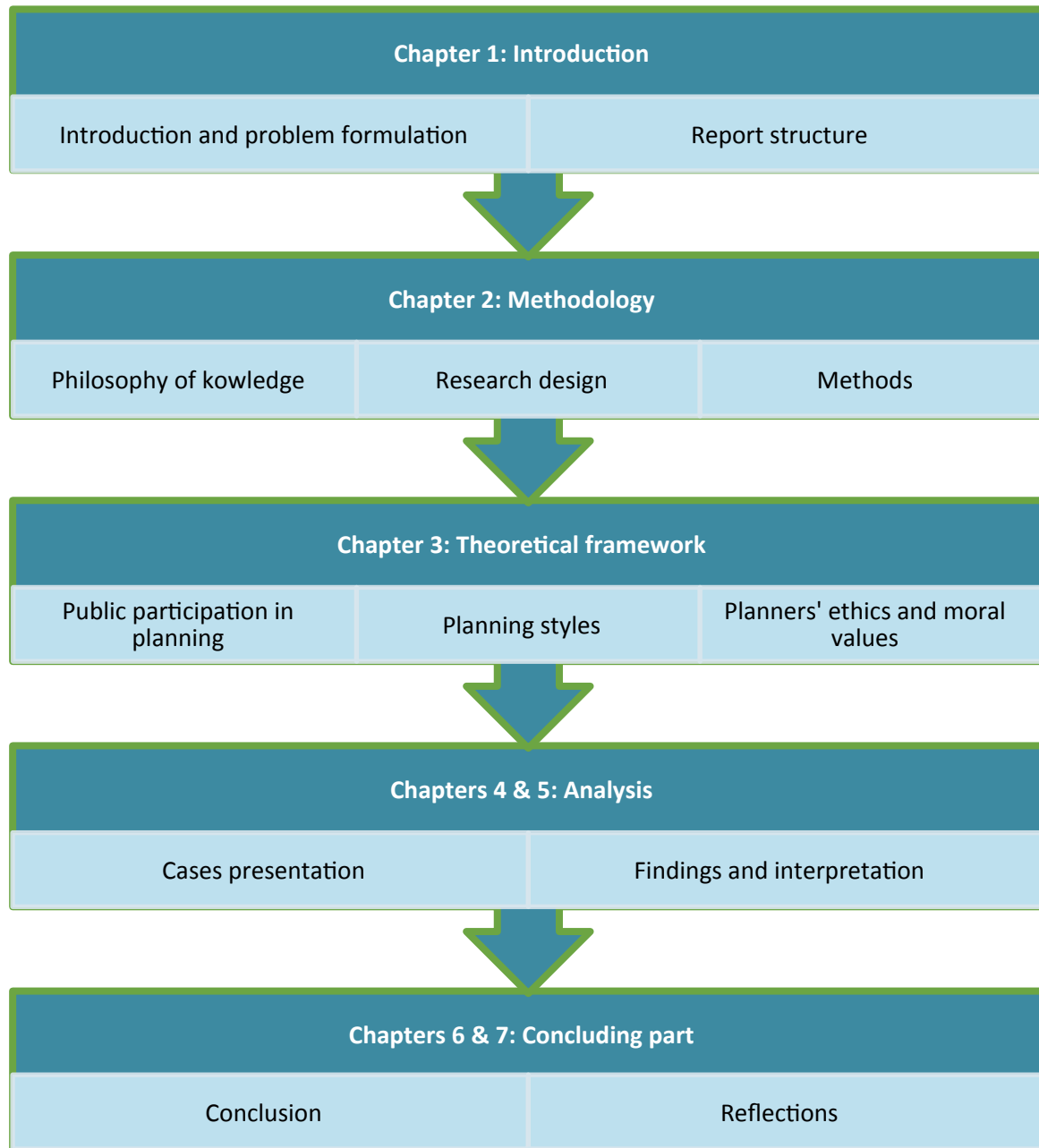
## 1.2 Report structure

The report consists of seven chapters:

- The first chapter was dedicated to introducing the problem formulation of the project, that is to say that the reader was provided with a presentation of what the research challenge for this project was and where it came from;
- The second chapter of this report presents the research methodology that was adopted to find answers to the problem formulation. It clarifies the philosophical stance about knowledge acquisition on which the project is based, and explains the research design and methods that were found the most appropriate;
- With the third chapter revealing the theoretical framework for the project, we enter in the heart of the matter by reading through debates in the literature about this project's areas of concern. The theoretical framework developed in this chapter serves to inform the analysis and findings of the project;
- The next part of the report is divided in two chapters: chapter 4 presents the planners who have been interviewed in the context of this project, along with a presentation of the planning agencies that they work for. In chapter 5 the qualitative data collected from the interviews is analyzed and interpreted through the 'theoretical glasses' represented by chapter 3, in order to answer the problem formulation;

- Two chapters form the concluding part of the report: chapter 6 consists of the conclusion of the project, in which the main findings are summarized; chapter 7 presents reflections upon the project as a whole and the knowledge and experience gained from it.

The report structure is illustrated by Figure 1 here below:



**Figure 1: Report structure**

## 2 Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is firstly to provide the reader with an understanding of the philosophy of knowledge on which the project is grounded. In other words, the point is to explain the knowledge acquisition process that was followed during the research, and to highlight the type of knowledge that could be gained from reading this report. In addition, the research design derived from the chosen philosophy of knowledge will be presented, along with the methods that were used to gather and take advantage of the theoretical and empirical data.

### 2.1 Philosophy of knowledge: a hermeneutical approach

As presented by the problem formulation in the introduction, the purpose of this project is to highlight the relationship between planners' personal ethics and moral values and the way their frame their role and engage their communities in public planning. The problem will be treated through the eyes of the different interviewed planners; the attempt is to empathically understand the problem from the perspective of planners. By concentrating on the planning practitioners' stories to conduct qualitative research, we are making sense of diverse humans' experiences in the world. The aim is not to objectively analyze and generalize a phenomenon, it is rather to hear and value planning practices, as advocated by Forester (1999):

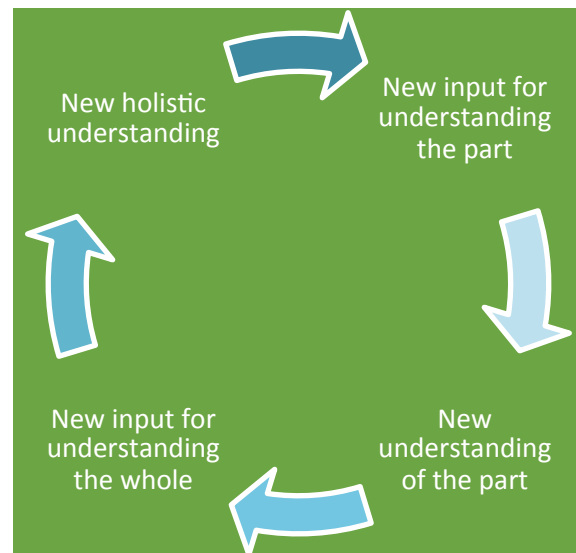
“Practitioners without insight will be callous, barely competent, if not altogether ineffective; students and theorists of planning without moral perception – the appreciation – of what is pressing in real cases will be naïve and irrelevant, if not unwittingly condescending and disrespectful too. [...]

These practitioners' accounts are not case histories, but they are windows onto the world of planning possibilities. These practice stories provide insights rather than simple answers, reminders rather than instructions, examples rather than hypotheses” (pp. 243-244).

This research philosophy allows me as a researcher and future planner to develop knowledge about different planning practices, and to increase my capacity to use practical wisdom in the future. The focus on the interpretation of human action or practices corresponds to a hermeneutical approach to social research (Bryman, 2008, p. 694). In addition, hermeneutics relies on the principle that there is a circularity of the process of interpreting and of the learning pattern. According to Kezar (2000), this is what Heidegger described as the hermeneutic circle, which can be illustrated by Figure 2 and explained as follows:

“Unless we are totally alien to a concept, we will have some preliminary understanding to it; yet we both understand and misunderstand. The circularity of understanding is that we understand in terms of what we already know. The more we engage the topic in reflection and practice, the deeper we come to know. Understanding develops as we become more engaged and concerned, through repeated experience, interaction with the issue in the real world, and reflection” (Kezar, 2000, pp. 386-387).

Therefore, rather than pretending that a perfectly objective analysis of a problem is possible, hermeneutics recognizes that the researcher's own prejudices and pre-understanding of the problem cannot be disclaimed and should be taken into consideration and reflected upon when new inputs are added to the equation. The process of understanding starts with our pre-understanding of the issue, upon which is added new input for understanding a part of the issue. This leads to the new understanding of the part, which represents a new input for understanding the whole that will allow a new understanding of the whole.



**Figure 2: Representation of the Hermeneutic Circle**  
(Adapted from Arler, 2008, 2004)

Gaining knowledge is therefore a continuous process, where a constantly higher understanding of the issue is achieved as more parts are explored. This project should be considered as one input added to the understanding of the phenomenon set by the problem formulation. As different people reflect on this problem one after the other, a greater understanding of the phenomenon can be achieved.

In addition, hermeneutics implies that empathy is used to understand human behavior (Bryman, 2008, p. 15), that is to say that the social researcher is able to identify himself with the subject of research. This is particularly important in this project, as it is centered on the understanding of planners' experiences and opinions through qualitative interviews. During the interviews, and when reading this report, the researcher and the reader should seek to put themselves in the interviewed planners' shoes and to understand the problem through their eyes. In order to do so, chapters 3 and 4 of this report present the theoretical framework and practical background in which the empirical data collection is situated, which helps situating the project in his context. This is also a way of acknowledging Heidegger's theory, as he "believed that an individual must have a practical sense of the domain or context within which a phenomenon is situated in order to develop understanding; he termed this *Fore-having* (1962)" (Kezar, 2000, p. 388).

## 2.2 Research design: a cross-sectional design with case study elements

The research design of a project is the logical path that leads from research questions to concluding answers, justifying which data to collect and the methods of collecting and analyzing them (Yin, 2003, pp. 20-21). There are many possible research designs for a project, depending on its nature. As explained in the previous section, the nature of this project is qualitative, that is to say that the research is "concerned with words rather than numbers" and is focused on "the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants" (Bryman, 2008, p. 366). Qualitative research is often associated with case studies, where "the basic case study entails the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case" (Bryman, 2008, p. 52) and the

“case study research is concerned with the complexity and particular nature of the case in question” (Stake, 1995, in Bryman, 2008, p. 52). However, in this project the stories of four planners working for different public agencies in Colorado were collected through qualitative interviews and will be analyzed. The fact that the project focuses on more than one planner or ‘case’ contradicts Bryman’s definition of a case study. So how could this research design be defined?

Another interesting category of research design given by Bryman (2008) is the cross-sectional research design. He defines it as follows:

“A cross-sectional design entails the collection of data on *more than one case* (usually quite a lot more than one) and at *a single point in time* in order to collect a body of *quantitative or quantifiable data* in connection with two or more variables (usually many more than two), which are then examined to detect *patterns of association*” (p. 44).

The facts that the cross-sectional design focuses on “more than one case” (to look for variation between the cases and make distinctions between them) and that the data collection occurs “at a single point in time” (as opposed to the study of the same case at two or more different points in time) are interesting features in relation to our project. However, Bryman strongly associates the cross-sectional research design to quantitative research, which contradicts the project backdrop. On the other hand, Bryman (2008) also states: “qualitative research often entails a form of cross-sectional design. A fairly typical form of such research is when the research employs unstructured interviewing or semi-structured interviewing with a number of people” (p. 48).

The difficulty of determining if an investigation is a case study or a cross-sectional research design is not rare, both within a qualitative research setting and a quantitative research setting: “when an investigation is based exclusively upon quantitative research, it can be difficult to determine whether it is better described as a case study or as a cross-sectional research design. The same point can often be made about case studies based upon qualitative research” (Bryman, 2008, p. 53). In order to make sense of these reflections, Bryman (2008) suggests that the unit of analysis for the project is clearly defined (p. 54).

Similarly, Yin (2003) states that the unit of analysis is one of the key components of a case study research design, as it “is related to the fundamental problem of defining what the ‘case’ is” (p. 22). Yin (2003) gives the following definition of the unit of analysis in the context of social research:

“For instance, in the classic case study, a ‘case’ may be an individual. [...] In each situation, an individual person is the case being studied, and the individual is the primary unit of analysis. Information about each relevant individual would be collected, and several such individuals or ‘cases’ might be included in a multiple-case study” (pp. 22-23).

It is obvious that this project is not a study about planning practices in Colorado. Thus, Colorado is not the unit of analysis, that is to say that it is not the focus of interest in itself. Rather it serves as a common context for the stories of the four interviewed planners, and the project is concerned with the responses to the problem formulation drawn from the interpretation of the stories of a sample

of planners. Furthermore, we can say that the problem formulation raises at least three areas of concern that will need to be addressed in the project: (1) the ethical and moral values expressed by planners; (2) the planners' definition or opinion on the role they should and do play as professionals; and (3) the different community engagement projects they are involved in. As such, we can consider that each planner represents a 'case' for the project, and that the primary units of analysis are the three areas of concern raised by the problem formulation and described above.

Therefore, the research design of this project contains elements of both case study and cross-sectional research: it focuses on three areas related to planning practices (*units of analysis*) sustained by the stories of four planners (*cases*), allowing the researcher to look for variations and similarities between the cases (because there is *more than one case*) by collecting data at *a single point in time*. In addition to empirical data collection, this project contains an important part dedicated to theory, which enables the researcher to develop a relevant data analysis. The following section will describe the relationships between theory and research that derive from the dual character of this project's research design.

### 2.2.1 Inductive and deductive processes

Inductive and deductive theories are concerned with the relationship between theory and research in social research methods. With an inductive posture theory is generated out of research, as opposed to a deductive posture where research is conducted on the basis of hypotheses and ideas derived from theory. According to Bryman (2008), "*deductive theory* represents the commonest view of the nature of the relationship between theory and social research" (p. 9) and is also one of the characteristics of positivism, which can be described as "an epistemological position that advocates the application of the methods of the natural sciences to the study of social reality and beyond" (Bryman, 2008, p. 13). Furthermore, deductive theory tends to be associated more easily with quantitative research, while inductive theory is usually associated with qualitative theory. According to Bryman (2008), this is also true when cross-sectional and case study research designs are at play:

"When a qualitative research strategy is employed within a cross-sectional design, [...] the approach tends to be inductive. In other words, whether a cross-sectional design is inductive or deductive tends to be affected by whether a quantitative or a qualitative research strategy is employed. The same point can be made of case study research. When the predominant research strategy is qualitative, a case study tends to take an inductive approach to the relationship between theory and research; if a predominantly quantitative strategy is taken, it tends to be deductive" (pp. 54-55).

However in this project, just as the research design contains both cross-sectional and case study elements, inductive and deductive approaches are both used at different stages of the project, as illustrated by Figure 3. At the start of the project, preliminary understanding and knowledge about planning, gained over time through different readings and lectures, was used to prepare the first round of interviews. I viewed this way of approaching the project as a means to avoid being eventually biased by an in-depth analysis of relevant theories, and above all as a means to stay open to the stories the planners had to tell. Once the first round of interviews had been conducted, their

interpretation enabled me to identify themes that were predominant in the practitioners' experiences and to search and analyze theories that were adapted to the problem, which corresponds to an inductive approach. This also allowed me to prepare for the second round of interviews, concentrating on issues raised by the theoretical debate, thus through a deductive process. The interpretation of the second round of interviews (together with the re-interpretation of the first ones) was then a means to refine the useful theories on which to reflect (induction), which finally guided to the re-interpretation of the second round of interviews (deduction). In addition, it should be noted that the problem formulation of the project also evolved as additional knowledge was gained. Thus, the process echoes the hermeneutical circle that was described earlier, where the assimilation of new knowledge is used to re-interpret the problem and reach a constantly higher level of knowledge.

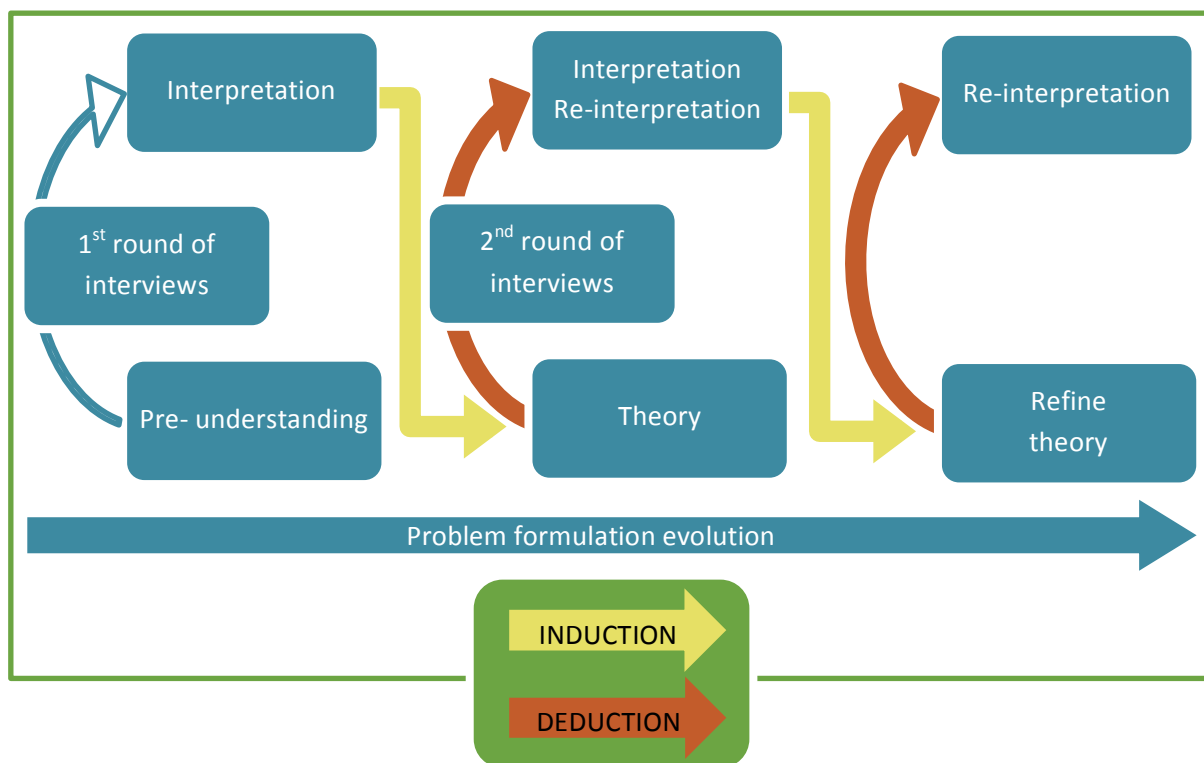


Figure 3: Inductive and deductive processes throughout the project

### 2.2.2 Sampling process

The main criteria for the selection of planners that derived from the problem formulation and practical considerations were the following:

- The planners should be based in Colorado;
- They should be experienced enough and have a relatively high position in their organizations, to be able to reflect on their life as a planner and on different planning projects that they had been working on;
- They should have been or be personally involved in projects or efforts from their organizations to involve the community in public planning.

At the beginning of the project, I targeted the Denver Region Council of Governments (DRCOG) as one important player from which it would be interesting to hear, as it is the largest Metropolitan Planning Organization of the Region (MPO). As such, it seemed to me that DRCOG couldn't be ignored from my research strategy. By browsing through their website, I was able to find different public involvement policy documents and to identify two or three names related to those. After a few emails and phone calls, I could get in touch with Jill Locantore, who is a senior planner working on the region's master plan with around 7 years of experience and therefore corresponded to the criteria of selection that I had chosen.

The choice of selecting a planner from DRCOG also had a valuable consequence that I hadn't anticipated: because DRCOG is the main planning agency in the Denver region and works with a big part of the local governments in Colorado, Jill Locantore was able to guide me in the selection of the other planners whom I could be interested to interview. In fact, she has extremely good knowledge about the different communities that are or have been carrying interesting projects in regard to community engagement. Thus, she gave me some contact details at the city of Golden and Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG), which ended up in the selection of two more planners, Steve Glueck at the city of Golden and Rich Muzzy at PPACG, respectively planning and development department manager with 30 years of experience and environmental program manager with 10 years of experience.

The fourth organization that I selected was the city of Boulder, because it is where I live and I found it interesting to gain knowledge about my local community. In addition, Jill Locantore confirmed that the city of Boulder also had carried out interesting community engagement projects, so I selected Jean Gatza, sustainability planner with about 15 years of experience, as the fourth planner I would interview.

## 2.3 Methods

As discussed before, the main method of data collection for this project consisted in qualitative semi-structured interviews. However, this was complemented by the use of theoretical literature and documentary information, in order to gain additional information about the context in which the interviews were carried on. According to Yin (2003), "the use of multiple sources of evidence in case studies allows an investigator to address a broader range of historical, attitudinal, and behavioral issues" (p. 98). By choosing to use multiple sources of data, which is commonly called data triangulation, the validity of the project increases as the findings may be crosschecked. The three methods used in this project will now be described.

### 2.3.1 Literature review and document analysis

As explained earlier by the inductive and deductive processes that shaped the relationship between theory and research, theoretical literature was used at different stages of the project either to support or to inspire the interpretation of the interviews. By literature is meant different types of publications coming mainly from the academic realm: books, articles, journals, lecture presentations.



The main entry points to this literature are the different university libraries to which I had access at the time of research (Auraria campus library in Denver and the library of the university of Colorado in Boulder), Aalborg university intranet and web-based scientific databases such as Web of Science. In general, literature found in these locations is considered to be reliable, especially when the publications are cited by other researchers in other publications.

In addition to literature review, different documents related to the cases were analyzed. These documents can be minutes of meeting, agendas, reports, studies, organizational records, maps and charts, survey data, plans, booklets. The main sources of these documents are the different agencies' websites in which the interviewed planners work. These documents are usually published on the Internet because of legal requirements for public communication, and are therefore considered reliable, even if some advertising or marketing flyers might need to be carefully utilized. Other official sources of documentation such as demographic or statistical data were found on US federal or state agencies' websites, which are also considered to be reliable sources.

### 2.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

As mentioned earlier, qualitative interviews were the main source of evidence for this project. In total, I interviewed four planners twice, that is to say a total of eight interviews. I considered very important to perform the interviews face-to-face each time, as opposed to phone interviews, because direct contact between the interviewee and the interviewer enables the communication between the two persons to be more fluid, and gives the interviewer a possibility to perceive unspoken opinions and estimate the sincerity of the interviewee. For example, it is easier to detect if the interviewee is exercising self-restraint on a topic that could be sensitive. In addition, I was expecting the planners to somewhat unveil, as I tried to bring them to talk about personal topics such as ethics and moral, which I think can only be done if there is a sense of trust between the two persons that is much easier building face-to-face. This last argument about building trust can also explain why I met twice with each planner, in addition to obtaining information that goes beyond factual presentations and enables in-depth analysis of the planners' stories. In fact, the second time I met with the planners, I had the feeling of 'knowing' them and I felt more comfortable about asking personal questions. I suppose that the opposite is also true and that the planners felt more comfortable about sharing personal views the second time we met. Furthermore, all the interviews were recorded, after permission was given by the interviewees, which can also be intimidating the first time.

The type of interviews that I chose to perform was semi-structured, which is a flexible process that aims at creating the atmosphere of a normal conversation between two persons rather than the one of a questionnaire. Bryman (2008) defines semi-structured interviews as follows:

"The researcher has a list of questions or fairly specific topics to be covered, often referred to as an *interview guide*, but the interviewee has a great deal of leeway in how to reply. Questions may not follow on exactly in the way outlined on the schedule. Questions that are not included in the guide may be asked as the interviewer picks up

on things said by interviewees. But, by and large, all the questions will be asked and a similar wording will be used from interviewee to interviewee” (p. 438).

I prepared an interview guide prior to each interview (see below), but during the interviews I paid great attention to giving leeway to the planners and let them express what they wanted. This exercise requires that the interviewer is extremely concentrated and listens carefully to what the interviewee says in order to be able to ask for additional relevant information on a topic and try to get the undisclosed details of a story. This is a key feature in a hermeneutical approach to social research, as the researcher should seek to put herself/himself in the shoes of the interviewees and to understand the issue from the point of view of the interviewees. Furthermore, I also paid attention to the form of questions I was asking. In fact, too many ‘why’ questions can sound aggressive and force the interviewee to adopt a defensive position. On the other hand, ‘how’ and ‘what’ questions enable the interviewee to develop their answers spontaneously and choose the direction in which they want the conversation to head. In line with this, it is important to keep in mind not to ask too many closed questions that interrupt the interviewee in his reasoning.

During the interviews, I used an interview guide on which I based my questioning. The interview guides for the first round of interviews were more or less the same for each planner; for the second round of interviews I adapted each interview guide to each planner according to the information I had obtained or was missing after the first round of interviews. However, the interview guides all followed the same framework:

- An introductory phase in which the interviewee talked about his background or provided factual information about his job or company. This phase enables the conversation to be launched smoothly and creates a pleasant atmosphere in the room.
- A detailed descriptive phase when we get to the heart of the matter. This was the occasion for the planners to come back and tell their stories about different projects where the community had been engaged and in which they had been involved, to analyze the projects’ successes or failures, to give their opinions about different initiatives.
- A reflection phase when the interviewee is asked to reflect on different topics related to the research topic or rose in the previous phases or interview. Although values and moral can be perceived throughout the whole interviews, this phase was dedicated to the interviewee developing on personal opinions and to opening up the discussion on perspectives that the interviewee wanted to insist on.

The interview guides can be found in appendix A and appendices C. In addition, all the interviews have been transcribed, to allow for easier reflection and interpretation. The interview transcriptions can be found in appendices B and appendices D.

## 2.4 On the replicability and validity of the methodology

The idea about detailing the philosophy of knowledge on which this project is grounded, the research design and ensuing methods is to provide the reader with an understanding of the logic behind the research, but also to enable eventual future researcher to do the same type of research. One can in fact imagine that the same research question is applied to a different context or asked to more planners. The point then would not be to expect the same kind of answers, but to take advantage of additional stories about planning practices.

This leads us to the evaluation of the validity of such research design. The main source of evidence being the qualitative interviews of four planners, one might question the objectivity and therefore the validity of the research. But this project doesn't aim at objectively analyzing a planning problem. Rather it aims at making sense of diverse planning practice experiences and learning about new ideas and strategies that can only reveal themselves in practice stories. In his book dedicated to studying planning practices, Forester (1999) argues that "insightful practice can lead to stronger and deeper theory" and that by "keep[ing] our eyes on actual practices struggling in the face of power and inequality [we can] build better cities and healthier and more vibrant communities" (p. xi). Furthermore, Forester (1999) justifies that we are able to learn from practice stories, as we would do from the insights of friends, because they "help us to see anew our practical situations and our possibilities, our interests and our values, our passions and our working bets about what we should do" (p. 36). To conclude, we can cite Innes (1995) as she also justifies why we can learn from stories: "the study of practice shows that what ordinary people know is at least as relevant as what is found through systematic professional inquiry. [...] Indeed, the connection to such narratives is what makes the difference between information that is used and information that is not" (p. 185).

### 3 Theoretical framework

The purpose of this chapter is to develop the theoretical framework that will inform the analysis in the next chapters. By 'theoretical framework' is meant a review of the academic literature on the project's areas of concern, that is to say that we now aim at understanding what the planning theorists have to say about the subject. In fact, while the methodology chapter intended to provide the reader with some sort of 'guidelines' on the way to read this report, we enter now in the heart of the project. Different positions and arguments will be revealed by browsing through different articles and books, in order to build an outline of potential units of analysis that can be referred to in the analysis and discussion chapters. The point of departure of the theoretical framework is the research question of the project formulated in the introduction:

**What are the ethical and moral values  
on which planners rely to frame their role  
and engage their communities in public planning?**

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, this research question raises three themes to be elaborated in this report: (1) the ethical and moral values expressed by planners; (2) the planners' definition or opinion on the role they should and do play as professionals; and (3) the different community engagement projects that they are involved in. However, these topics are not to be developed independently from each other; for example we are not aiming at learning what the planners' ethical position is on advocacy planning. Rather, these topics are interrelated and organized around the central theme of public participation in planning, which is often advocated in the political and planning discourses as good governance practice. As such, it is important to learn about different aspects that could impact the implementation and success of citizen involvement strategies. As explained in the introduction, planners have an important role to play in that regard, and they often have to rely on their ethical and moral values to do so. Therefore, we are trying to highlight the relationship between the community engagement strategies elaborated by planners and what they express in terms of ethics, moral and professional identity (or role).

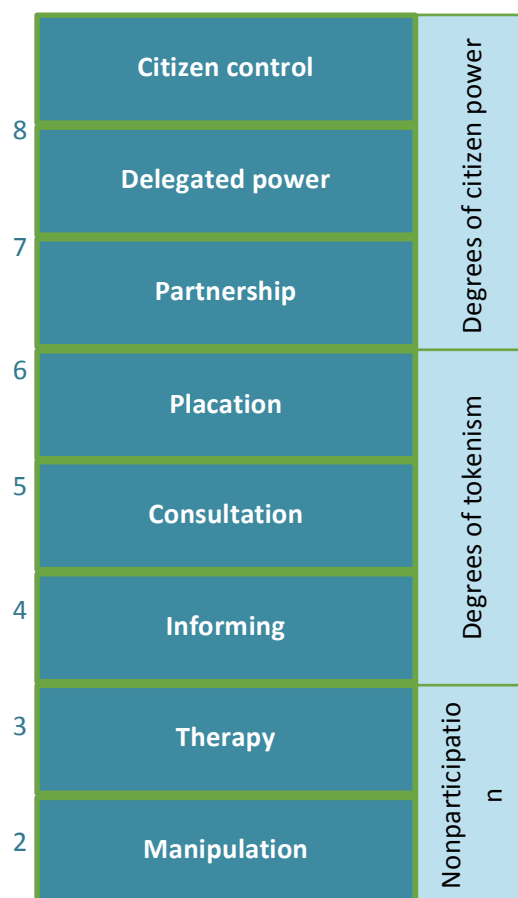
In order to understand what could ideally be achieved by planners in terms of citizen involvement efforts according to planning theorists, this chapter starts by developing on the topic of public participation. This will enable us to learn about some of the ideas on which public participation relied on originally, and then to realize that public participation can be advocated for a diversity of reasons and implemented through a diversity of methods. This leads us to the second part of this chapter dedicated to the description of different planning styles that planners can be associated with; in fact, the variety of rationales and strategies of public participation that planners can advocate and choose raises questions about the different roles planners can play and the different professional identity they can endorse. Finally, because the choices they make about public participation ultimately rely on their morality, we will try to identify a set of ethical values associated with each planning style, keeping in mind that in reality planners might match different planning styles and set of values at once.

### 3.1 Public participation in planning

As mentioned above, the purpose of this section is to present a literature review on the topic of public participation in planning, in order to get an understanding of some of the directions the theoretical debate took in the recent years on the subject. Even if this project is centered on the practice of planning, it is important to browse through theories as inspiring ideas toward better practices. In order to provide a contextual background to these ideas, this section will start by presenting what is still considered as “the best-known model [of participation]” (Baker et al., 2007, p. 82): Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation. After a brief review of some critiques that this model gave rise to, different rationales for public participation will be presented through different contemporary authors’ writings. This section will end by developing on different strategies of public participation that could be used in practice.

#### 3.1.1 A conceptual ladder of citizen participation

As mentioned in the introduction, one of the arguments in favor of public participation relates to the empowerment of disadvantaged groups in the decision-making processes. This idea was originally developed in 1969 by Arnstein, who created a conceptual ladder of citizen participation (see Figure 4).



**Figure 4: Arnstein's ladder of participation**  
(Adapted from Arnstein, 1969, p. 217)

Citizen participation is here defined as “a categorical term for citizen power” (p. 216). For Arnstein, the debate about citizen participation should be centered on the amount of power that is given to the public, and especially to the ‘have-not’ (which can be understood as minorities or disadvantaged): citizen participation is “the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future” (p. 216). Even if she recognizes that the ladder is a simplification, Arnstein argues that “it helps illustrate the point that so many have missed – that there are significant gradations of citizen participation” (p. 217). The eight rungs of the ladder are in fact arranged into three main categories:

- The two lower rungs of ‘nonparticipation’ that don’t enable the public to participate but “enable the power holders to ‘educate’ or ‘cure’ the participants” (p. 217);
- The three next rungs progress to degrees of tokenism, where the participants can hear, be heard and eventually start having some influence (placation), but still lack power and have “no insurance of changing the status quo” (p. 217);
- Finally the higher three rungs represent levels where citizens actually have power to negotiate (partnership), dominate the decision-making process (delegated power) or have control over the process (citizen control).

Although this model has been highly influential in planning theory, it has been criticized for different reasons, which Booth & Richardson (2001) review:

- It is too rigid in the sense that different levels of participation can be appropriate for different situations (Wilcox, 1994 in Booth & Richardson, 2001, p. 146);
- Different actors and interests, issues and techniques will be involved by each level of participation (Hampton, 1979, Darke, 1990 & Wilcox, 1994 in Booth & Richardson, 2001, p. 146), which makes it delicate to place the different levels on a unique scale;
- “Several different levels of participation can operate simultaneously” (p. 146);
- It doesn’t recognize the fact that power relationships between different actors and different interests are complex and can influence people’s actions outside of any predictable pattern (p. 146).

Furthermore, the fact that it is focused on the ‘have-not’ groups raises questions about the will of these groups to effectively participate in the decision-making process, and about the role of planners in listening to the majority’s voice versus giving more attention to the minorities. More generally, some might question the targeting process inherent to the preparation of public participation strategies and even the fact of having to exclude special groups, issues or outcomes which is inherent to practical versus ideal citizen involvement (see for example Connelly & Richardson, 2004).

Therefore, rather than assuming that the lower rungs of the ladder are less desirable than the higher ones, which seems a little too trivial, it is important to address at first whether citizens and stakeholders should be involved in the decision-making processes and why. The next section provides an overview of varied rationales for public participation, which serves as background information to then understand the diversity of citizen involvement methods that planners theoretically have at their disposal.

### 3.1.2 Rationales for participation

Booth & Richardson (2001) argue that the first question to address when designing strategies for public involvement concerns its rationale, or in other words the reasons why participation is carried out and what outcome is likely to result in the end (p. 146). Campbell & Marshall (2000) also highlight the importance of discussing the purposes of public participation in order to be able to assess what benefits should be expected from it, by citing:

“... In order to reach an assessment of the effectiveness of participation techniques it is necessary to have a clear conception of the role and purposes of participation itself. The formulation of guidelines cannot therefore be considered as a technical operation but must be set within a normative context” (Thornley, 1977 in Campbell & Marshall, 2000, p. 324)

Different authors suggest different rationales and classifications of rationales in the contemporary literature. For a greater clarity of arguments in this report, I propose to organize the different purposes for public participation cited in five articles (Baker & al., 2007; Bickerstaff & Walker, 2001; Booth & Richardson, 2001; Callanan, 2005; Innes & Booher, 2004) around six common themes:

1. Public participation is a legal requirement;
2. Public participation is part of the new urban governance agenda and a means to legitimize public decisions;
3. Public participation represents an opportunity for information exchange between the public and local authorities;
4. Public participation is a step towards consensus building through interaction between stakeholders;
5. Public participation produces a better outcome;
6. Public participation increases justice in the city.

The first rationale for public participation that can be put forward is simply the fact that it is a legal requirement, as Bickerstaff & Walker (2001, p. 437) and Innes & Booher (2004, p. 423) remind us. Planners carry out citizen involvement actions because they are required to do so by law. Bickerstaff & Walker (2001), after having conducted a survey in 58 English highway authorities, even state that almost half of respondents “identified the dictates of central government as a major reason for embarking on a public involvement programme” (p. 437). Even if this reason might seem to be far from Arnstein’s ideal of citizen empowerment, it is interesting to note that governmental mandates are a crucial link in the chain, which leads to highlighting that the implementation of public participation strategies in planning is highly related to a strong political will to do so.

As a matter of fact, the second rationale for public participation is related to the shift from classic forms of government to new public governance, that is to say from representative democracy to participative democracy: “governance implies a move towards more inclusive decision-making, involving a wider range of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders” (Callanan, 2005, p. 911). Thus, new public governance enables the involvement of a plurality of actors in decision-making in a more informal way, which “could improve the delivery of essential services [to people]”

(Baker & al., 2007, p. 80). While classic forms of government are associated with a democratic deficit which most obvious sign is the declining turnouts at elections, “public bodies need to provide other avenues for participation, which may in turn stimulate greater interest in the political process” (Callanan, 2005, p. 911). Participation might therefore renew the interest of the public in the institutions and politics, but also represent “an attempt to win public support for political decisions which have already been made” (Booth & Richardson, 2001, p. 147) and reduce the risk of objections of these decisions (Bickerstaff & Walker, 2001, p. 437). The same idea on a more optimistic side can be translated into seeing public participation as an opportunity to increase the legitimacy of public decisions (Baker & al., 2007, p. 80):

“If a planner can say ‘We held a dozen public hearings and reviewed hundreds of comments and everyone who wanted had a chance to say his piece’, then whatever is decided is, at least in theory, democratic and legitimate” (Innes & Booher, 2004, p. 423).

Finally, on a higher degree of efficiency, participation can create a sense of community ownership of public policy, that is to say that local authorities using citizen involvement strategies will be able to gain public buy-in into the policy (Bickerstaff & Walker, 2001, p. 437; Callanan, 2005, p. 912).

With the third rationale for public participation in decision-making, we move away from purely political concerns towards more strategic ones. In fact, public participation is often related to the idea of information exchange between stakeholders, the public and local authorities. Firstly it represents an opportunity for the planning agencies to communicate on proposed schemes. Hampton (1979 in Booth & Richardson, 2001, p. 147) makes a distinction between two different views on the subject: public participation is a way to publicize plans, that is to say that the information provided is not necessarily objective and pleads the public agencies’ case; the second option is for local authorities to more neutrally provide information about a proposal to the public, which adds an educational dimension. However, the information sharing rationale for public participation is not only a one-way process from governmental bodies to the public; it represents also a chance for the public to share their views and opinions about policy proposals up to the local authorities (Bickerstaff & Walker, 2001, p. 437), and “for decision makers to find out what the public’s preferences are so these can play a part in their decisions” (Innes & Booher, 2004, p. 422). Without clarifying the way the public’s comments should practically be incorporated, this last statement suggests that the public could actually have some influence in the decision-making process, which leads to the fourth rationale for public participation.

The fourth rationale is a recognition of the fact that the public and stakeholders detain valuable knowledge that government should be able to take advantage of:

It is an “acknowledgement that government does not always ‘know best’, and that stakeholders can bring their own expertise to the process – that in our increasingly interdependent world, past certainties may no longer hold true, that government does not necessarily have all the answers, and that stakeholders may often have expertise on public policy issues to bring to the table” (Callanan, 2005, pp. 911-912).



The consequence of this statement is that local authorities should open the policy process and seek genuine interaction and debate with the public, and also actively engage in discussion on future policy (Booth & Richardson, 2001, p. 147; Hampton, 1979 in Booth & Richardson, 2001, p. 147). Bickerstaff & Walker (2001) move a step further in that direction when mentioning that the acknowledgment of the competence and knowledge hold by the public is a necessary condition to deliberation, that is to say “working together to achieve a shared vision or consensus” (pp. 437-438), even though they note that this types of “rationales linked to public competence were less apparent [in the survey results] with sometimes implicit references made to [it]” (p. 437). To conclude on this topic, it is interesting to observe that Innes & Booher (2004) do not mention consensus-building as being a rationale for public participation, although Innes is well known for having developed a model of planning through consensus-building with stakeholders (see Innes, 1996 and Innes, 2004).

The fifth rationale for public participation concerns the outcomes of the process, that is to say that citizen involvement is believed to improve decisions or lead to better policy through the incorporation of people’s local knowledge into the equation (Innes & Booher, 2004, p. 422; Bickerstaff & Walker, 2001, p. 437). Baker & al. (2007) also sees it as a way to make sure policies are effective, since involving the public might enable local authorities to be on the right track from the beginning and therefore save money in the long-term: “understanding people’s needs, preferences and values by talking with them is a way to enhance the effectiveness of decision making and service provision” (p. 80).

The last but not least rationale relates to the equality and rights of citizens to have a say in decision-making processes that will affect them. Engaging local people is a way to ensure that policies or plans meet and reflect local needs (Bickerstaff & Walker, 2001, p. 437). Furthermore, public participation is a way of advancing fairness and justice in the city:

“There are systematic reasons why the needs and preferences of many groups, particularly the least advantaged, are not recognized through the normal information sources and analytic procedures. These needs may only come onto the radar screen during an open participation process” (Innes & Booher, 2004, pp. 422-423).

The six rationales for public participation are summarized in Table 1 for more clarity. It is acknowledged that this list might not be exhaustive, and that planning practitioners might bring additional reasons for engaging their communities on the table. However, this framework provides a good basis for analysis, and shows that the motivations for engaging citizens and communities in the decision-making process in planning can be plural and diverse. Along the same lines and on more practical considerations, the next section shows that there is also a diversity of public participation strategies that planners might consider adopting in their constituency, depending on the outcomes they wish to reach at the end of the process.

Rationales for public participation	What does it mean?
1. Legal requirement	Planners are required to involve the public by law
2. New public governance (plurality of actors)	Gain support from the public Increase the legitimacy of decisions Create a sense of community ownership
3. Information exchange	Top-down publicity or education Bottom-up sharing of views and opinions
4. Public competence	Genuine interaction and debate Deliberation towards a shared vision or consensus
5. Better outcome	Improve decisions or lead to better policy Build more effective policies and services
6. Advancing fairness and justice	Right to participate Meet and reflect local needs, especially those of the least advantaged

**Table 1: Rationales for public participation**

### 3.1.3 Strategies for participation

In order to categorize the different methods of citizen involvement that planners could use in their constituencies, I propose using the framework developed by Leach & Wingfield (1999, pp. 49-50) and taken up by many other authors (for example Baker & al., 2007; Bickerstaff & Walker, 2001; Callanan, 2005). However, it is important to note that such framework can be somewhat limited, as different methods might be used simultaneously, forming what should be called a strategy for participation: “successful participation is likely to combine and build upon several different techniques in order to reach the goals of effective participation” (Baker & al., 2007, p. 84). Furthermore, the choice of methods to be used should be dependent of the rationales for public participation, as Booth & Richardson (2001) explain:

“Whilst there are a wide range of techniques available for public participation, methods and techniques are not developed in a vacuum. Ideally, they form part of a coherent strategy where techniques closely relate to the aims of consultation (Darke, 1990); who is to be consulted (stakeholders); levels of participation; and the balance of power between the political and professional decision-makers and the wider community of interests” (p. 147).

Therefore, Leach & Wingfield’s framework (1999, pp. 49-50) should be considered with caution. It identifies four main categories of public participation:

- Traditional methods, such as public meetings, issuing of consultation documents, question and answer sessions. According to Bickerstaff & Walker (2001), these methods

are still widely used and characterize a passive form of participation, that is to say that one-way communication is privileged (p. 438);

- Customer oriented methods, such as service-satisfaction surveys and opinion polls, complaints procedures or suggestion schemes;
- Innovative consultation methods, such as interactive websites, citizen panels and focus groups. The use of these types of methods is a step towards a more discursive approach (i.e. two-way communication). However they remain primarily consultative, meaning that the authorities are not required to take the outcomes of the consultation process if they do not find it appropriate (Bickerstaff & Walker, 2001, p. 439);
- Innovative deliberation methods related to specific issues, such as visioning exercises and citizens' juries.

Additional examples of participation methods by category are provided in Table 2. Again, this is not an exhaustive list and the study of planning practice might reveal other strategies that are not considered here. To conclude, it should be reminded again that the idea is not to choose one from different methods but to include them in a participative strategy, as formulated by (Booth & Richardson, 2001):

“The major challenge here is designing policy processes which can allow participative techniques to be used as an integral part of policy development and decision making, rather than as adjuncts which can be used to legitimize decisions, but which may be left out in the cold if their message is ‘inappropriate’” (p. 147).

Category of public participation methods	Examples
Traditional	Consultation documents Public meetings, public hearings Newsletters, exhibitions
Customer-oriented	Complaints and suggestions schemes Service-satisfaction surveys, opinion polls Interviews or questionnaires
Innovative consultation	Interactive websites Citizen panels, focus groups Referendums
Innovative deliberation	Discussion forums, area or neighborhood forums Visioning exercises Citizen juries, partnerships Workshops, seminars, conferences

**Table 2: Examples of public participation methods by category**  
(Adapted from Bickerstaff & Walker, 2001, p. 439)

## 3.2 Planning styles

The diversity of public participation rationales and methods shown in the previous sections raises questions about the role planners play in designing citizen involvement strategies for their agency. In fact, as Brody & al. (2003) showed, they at least have to make six critical choices when designing community engagement programs (see Chapter 1). Furthermore, it seems reasonable to think that planning practitioners design strategies that aim at matching the guidelines and vision of their agencies, as assumed by Sager (2001): “in practice, agency planners tend to design planning processes so that [their planning] style and [their agency’s] organizational properties correspond” (p. 513). Therefore, finding out about the way planners frame their role, more particularly in regard to public participation, might also provide information about their work description and duties, just as finding out about planners’ ‘philosophy of work’ might provide some information about their agencies’ identity.

However, prior to describing different planning styles, one might question if there is a role for planners in the society. In the era of new technologies and new channels of communication (emails, blogs, interactive websites, etc.), citizens should be able to communicate more easily and directly with their elected officials and their participation to public debates might be made easier. However, planning systems might not have evolved as fast as societies. In 1996 and 1997, Cadman & Davoudi (1997) interviewed more than thirty leading practitioners and academics in the UK, Europe and overseas, about “the future of planning system and its role in shaping the trajectory of spatial change”; “the changing role of the ‘planner’; the type of skills required to fulfill that role; and the way these are or should be developed within planning education and research”. One of the first questions they asked was if there was a role for a planner in the changing society, and the unanimous answer they got was ‘yes’; there is a need for planners and planning to tackle some important issues, such as the need for sustainable development, the changing demand for housing, the interactions between economic vitality and quality of life, the domestic and international competition between cities, the consideration of different interests and needs in the policy-making process. Furthermore, the interviewees consistently defined the main role of the planner as “being competent and involved in the management of the planning system” and as “being concerned with the strategic formulation of plans and policies”. In order to do so, planners should have particular skills, such as possessing basic knowledge of the planning system and regulations and being familiar with the management of it, but also “mak[ing] effective connections between the diverse needs, interests and disciplines of land use and development, work[ing] collaboratively, and communicat[ing]”. (Cadman & Davoudi, 1997) Thus, it seems that collaborative planning is an influential planning style, but are there other coexisting planning styles?

Different authors have developed different typologies of planning styles. Campbell & Marshall (1999) base their work on five groupings that are technocratic rationalism, professionalism and procedural planning, incrementalism and pragmatism, communicative planning and advocacy planning. Sager (2001) uses a slight variation of this through “the four traditional and well-known labels” (p. 510), which are synoptic planning, incremental planning, communicative planning and advocacy planning. Finally Innes & Gruber (2005) develop a more practical typology of four conflicting planning styles based on empirical observations: the technical/bureaucratic style, the political influence style, the social movement style and the collaborative style. Even if the wording seems quite different, it is

argued here that these three different frameworks of planning styles are quite similar. They will now be described separately.

### 3.2.1 The rational-comprehensive planning style

The rational-comprehensive planning style is what Sager (2001) calls synoptic planning: it is a “technocratic style, and the influential communication takes place mostly among the experts of the agency” (p. 525). Since planners are the specialists and detain detailed knowledge on issues within their jurisdictions, they have a considerable agenda control. The main criteria for decision-making is rationality: with an objective and neutral position, planners aim at making decisions that are efficient, consistent throughout the planning process and at maximizing the goal achievement within the budget. The techniques that rational planners rely on are comprehensive approaches, for that they embrace all significant effects of a plan or policy, for example cost-benefit analyses or impact assessment studies. (Sager, 2001, p. 526)

The synoptic planning style can be compared with Campbell & Marshall’s (1999) technocratic rationalism and its variant professionalism and procedural planning. In fact, technocratic rationalism relies on “a view of planning as a generic activity which brings logic and reason to the process of decision-making, particularly within public sector organizations”. Planning is focused on the ends rather than the means, and the planner is a technical expert that is impartial and value free when applying techniques such as cost-benefit analysis. (Campbell & Marshall, 1999, p. 469) Professionalism and procedural planning, on the other end, accepts the judgmental and political nature of planning, but still relies on professional expertise and rigorous adherence to procedure. “This conceptualization suggests that the decisions made by planners will simultaneously have good consequences, in that they will serve the public interest, and be right, due to the impartiality of the procedures followed”. (Campbell & Marshall, 1999, pp. 470-471)

Finally, Innes & Gruber (2005) develop their “version of the rational/technical model of planning” through the technical/bureaucratic style. Planners still act as neutral advisors and make decisions based on the evaluation of a range of alternatives to determine which will work best according to defined goals, but in practice “may find themselves attached to bureaucracies providing documentation for proposals that are all but decided already on the basis of criteria other than the capacity of the policy to advance public goals”. From the technical/bureaucratic perspective, a good plan is one that meets that legislative requirements, is consistent with agency goals, and is fully backed up by relevant information. In this context, public participation has a “circumscribed role” and is seen mainly as public consultation; planners set the agenda for public meetings and ask the public to comment on different alternatives. Innes & Gruber (2005) note that the technical planners observed in their case study “approached public participation largely as a one-way educational effort, though they might modify a project based on local feedback”. (Innes & Gruber, 2005, pp. 180-181)

### 3.2.2 The incremental planning style

Incremental planning is centered on the precautionary principle and risk management. In this mode of planning, expert analysis does not prevail, as it does not prevent uncertainty, which is “managed by recommending action that can be corrected in case of failure” and “reduced by choosing policies close to the status quo” (Sager, 2001, p. 526). The aim is to avoid conflict and opposition at the maximum, and the agenda setting is left in the hands of those with the power who decide about political priorities. Therefore, expert planners do not influence the process as they would in synoptic planning, which becomes the domain of those responsible for external negotiation in the organization. “The disjointed character of the process implies expert competition in that input to the agency planning process comes from internal and external specialist planners, committees, and consultants”. Furthermore, a pragmatic attitude is adopted during the implementation phase in order to avoid controversy. (Sager, 2001, p. 526)

Campbell & Marshall (1999) define this style of planning incrementalism and pragmatism. They explain that “knowledge is acquired by doing and experimentation and is therefore fallible and temporary”. There is no absolute truth; rather something makes sense until contradicted by experience. This implies that “planning becomes a process of practical problem-solving guided by gradualist policies” and that incremental planning can be viewed “as a pragmatic form of policy-making”. Furthermore, it focuses on procedures that “will ensure the effective operation of the political bargaining process” rather than on the outcomes. Finally, in this mode of planning liberal values such as individual freedom and the acceptance of market economy are preferred over collectivist values. (Campbell & Marshall, 1999, pp. 471-472)

In the sense that it reinforces the power status quo and is done outside any well-defined framework, incremental planning could be compared to Innes & Gruber’s (2005) political influence style. However, for them this is the dominant style of planning in transportation project funding (which is the context of their case study). It is centered on one-on-one loyal and reciprocal relationships between a planner and other key benefiting players. “In the political influence style, a good regional plan is one that has the support of all powerful players. It is the sum of the individual interests of these players rather than a vision for the region”. Consequently, broad public participation is not compatible with this style of planning, which favors instead negotiation between individual beneficiaries. When citizen involvement is made possible, it is limited and specialized. (Innes & Gruber, 2005, pp. 181-182)

### 3.2.3 The communicative planning style

Communicative planning concentrates on an open and participatory process between all concerned groups, where empathy and mutual understanding are encouraged, and which aims at letting the conversation flows freely in the search for fair consensus. “Planners practicing in the communicative mode aim to base decision on widely accepted principles and on arguments sustained by impartial impact assessment”. Citizen participation and stakeholder involvement are crucial to communicative planning, in order to consider most viewpoints and gain qualitative arguments rather than formal expertise. (Sager, 2001, p. 527)

Campbell & Marshall (1999) argue that the communicative turn in planning has grown out of the scientific rationalism, putting stress on relativism and intersubjective meaning: “reasoning within policy-making is not entirely rejected but reconceptualized as an intersubjective process leading to mutual understanding and hence action”. As explained by Sager (2001), the planning process focuses on the search for consensus where no one’s set of interests predominates but all groups within society are able to participate on an equal base. In this context, “the role of the planner seems very much to be procedural in nature in that s/he facilitates discourse and attempts to ensure that marginalized interests participate”. (Campbell & Marshall, 1999, pp. 472-473)

The communicative planning style can be compared to Innes & Gruber’s (2005) collaborative style, which promotes face-to-face dialogue between the different stakeholders and collaborative work on a common strategy that addresses a shared problem. The basis for this approach is a “self-organizing and authentic [dialogue] in the sense that what people say is sincere, comprehensible, accurate, and a legitimate representation of the stakeholders’ interests”. For collaborative planners, stories and anecdotes represent as valid information as quantitative analyses, as long as all stakeholders agree it is true. Furthermore, “a good plan is one that responds to the interests of all stakeholders and creates joint benefits”. Finally, traditional participation methods such as public hearings are considered to be counterproductive in collaborative planning. (Innes & Gruber, 2005, pp. 183-184)

### 3.2.4 The advocacy planning style

The last style is the one of advocacy planning. It is assumed here that the planner is employed by a public planning agency and allocated the task of advocating for a client group “to take care of its interests, which are threatened by a private planning proposal”. Planners concentrate on the idea that advocating for an under-represented group will increase fairness and equity. “In addition to talking on behalf of the client, the advocate planner is usually expected to provide the client group with the knowledge necessary to express its goals and argue for its proposals in terms convincing to bureaucrats”. The client regards the advocate planner as a unique and loyal specialist of its interests. (Sager, 2001, p. 528)

Campbell & Marshall (1999) remind us that advocacy planning was originally defended by Davidoff (1965, in Campbell & Marshall, 1999), and grew from the idea that a value-neutral position was impossible to achieve in planning. Therefore, planners should become committed practitioners, which “would improve the quality of plan-making because, first, it would generate real alternatives to be evaluated and decided upon, and, second, there would be competition between planning groups to win political support for their plans”. Advocacy planning aims at ensuring all groups have a voice in the planning process, which would increase the degree of fairness and resonate with the American political pluralism. (Campbell & Marshall, 1999, p. 473)

By contrast, Innes & Gruber (2005) place advocacy planning outside of public agencies and title it the social movement style. Its aim is also to get excluded groups represented in the planning process, but here “individuals and organizations join together around a vision, in opposition to mainstream policy” to create a new source of power. Public demonstrations are typically used to publicize their message. This implies that “in the social movement style, a good plan is one that implements the

groups' vision". Planners advocating for social movement groups value data and stories that dramatize issues. Public participation is at the chore of this planning style, as the groups are open to anyone, seek extensive outreach, and represent people who are not usually listened to in traditional participation processes. (Innes & Gruber, 2005, p. 183)

### 3.2.5 Conclusion

It is always delicate to classify human beings into categories. However, it is still helpful to recognize that they can act differently from each other in comparable situations. The description of the different planning styles and the following summarizing table (see Table 3) provide information about different attitudes planners can adopt in their professional life and more particularly in regard to public participation, and about different planning paradigms conflicting in practice. It is not likely that they will choose one among the four pure styles to practice planning; rather they might have a preference concerning what they would like to achieve in their work but still have reactions or opinions characterizing the other ones depending on the situation, whether it is conscious or unconscious. Sager (2001) summarizes:

"Surely, planners can choose among the four modes, regarding them as *models* of the process they would like to follow. However, they are usually not in the position to design the process fully in accordance with one model only, as both they and the agency have to take competing functions, political cross-pressure, and bureaucratic effectiveness into account" (p. 514).

Planning style	Planner's role / position	Planning processes	Public participation strategies
Rational-comprehensive	Technical expert Rational, impartial Procedural	Cost-benefit analysis Impact assessment study Alternative design comparison	Consultation documents Public meetings
Incrementalism-pragmatism	Risk manager Pragmatic Political	Experimentation Practical problem-solving One-on-one relationships	Limited Public hearings
Communicative	Facilitator Open Fair	Consensus-building	Partnerships Focus groups
Advocacy	Public sector advocate Loyal Private sector advocate	Can defend their group as long as the process is open to them	Public representative associations/groups Public demonstrations

**Table 3: Planning styles, planners' roles and public participation strategies**



The way planners view and treat public participation is very different from a planning style to another. In a more recent article, Sager (2009) argues that the typical Nordic planner is torn between communicative planning ideals and neo-liberal realities, that is to say that s/he is confronted to a dilemma in her/his practice of planning, “in which pressures for community involvement in planning policy processes, and the democratization of policy practices, are heightening in a context whereby planners are increasingly having to justify their actions by recourse to measures of efficiency and value for money” (Imrie, 1999 in Sager, 2009, p. 81). Therefore, planners have to rely on their personal ethics and values in order to alleviate the tensions inherent to planning practice, more particularly on the way they consider the public when designing public participation strategies, as argued by Sager (2009):

“Even if reasons might differ, some forms of participative practices are supported by both modes of governance. However, the patches of common ground should not be allowed to overshadow the value differences pointed out in previous sections. The consequences of these differences will depend on the typical values and attitudes of practicing planners” (p. 74).

It is stunning that the resort, extent and eventually success of public participation in planning decision-making, a concept that is widely advocated as good governance practice, ultimately rely on practicing planners’ values and attitudes in that regard. As a consequence, it seems legitimate to attempt to reveal the impact of planners’ ethics and moral on planning processes, which might in turn increase the degree of transparency of the system. Pløger (2004) also advocates this, by saying: “planners’ actions can never be value free, and therefore planning analysis must try to trace explicit and implicit considerations of ethics in planning” (p. 50).

### 3.3 Planners’ ethics and moral values

Prior to developing on the topic of ethics in planning and planners’ moral values, a few definitions might be useful to back the discussion up:

1. Ethics:
  - [*usually treated as plural*] moral principles that govern a person's behavior or the conducting of an activity:  
*medical ethics also enter into the question*
  - [*usually treated as singular*] the branch of knowledge that deals with moral principles.
2. Morality: [mass noun] principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behavior:  
the matter boiled down to simple morality: innocent prisoners ought to be freed
  - [*count noun*] a particular system of values and principles of conduct:  
*a bourgeois morality*
  - the extent to which an action is right or wrong:  
*the issue of the morality of the possession of nuclear weapons*
3. Values: principles or standards of behavior; one's judgment of what is important in life:  
they internalize their parents' rules and values

(E-source: Oxford Dictionaries)

Ethics and moral values are therefore related to a person's choices between right and wrong, and good and bad behavior. According to Forester (1999), in planning "the study of ethics is the study of better and worse practice" (p. 221). Questions of ethics in planning concern various issues such as whom interests to serve, the nature of 'the good life', individuality versus community, equality and justice, and "are fundamental to the daily practice of planning" (Campbell & Marshall, 1999, p. 465). Yet theoretical literature misses guidance about what is good and bad and right and wrong in planning (Campbell & Marshall, 1999, pp. 468-469), and "planning studies lack conceptual and empirical research concerning questions of what ethics is as value and as frame of reference for planning" and "which ethical values planners value or prefer, and what ethics is to planners" (Pløger, 2004, p. 49). Thus, in his study Pløger (2004) interviewed leading planners in Oslo in order to try to outline a set of moral values recommended by planners as good practice, because, as discussed earlier, he argues:

"Planners' ethical values, as claims or/and morality, shape their views of not only what role and purpose planning and planners have, but also what kind of everyday life and community they wish to plan for" (Pløger, 2004, pp. 57-58).

Even if Pløger's (2004) study is situated in a Norwegian context, which might be very different from American planning, it might still be interesting to present his findings. The purpose here is not to translate them directly into this project's context; rather it is to gather new ideas about the subject. Since Pløger's (2004) conclusions are drawn from the experience of leading planners in Oslo, and since for this project leading planners in Colorado were interviewed, we might be able to identify similarities or oppositions in opinions expressed by planners; even if the contexts are not comparable, people might have the same view about something throughout the world.

Pløger's (2004) conclusion from the interviews is organized around three areas of ethical practice that planners highlighted repeatedly: 'the right action' (deontology), the defense of 'common interests' (legacy of advocacy planning) and 'the need to have control' over the planning process (management approach) (pp. 59-62). Each of these are described here after:

- Deontology focuses on whether an action is right or wrong, rather than on the outcomes on this action. "As a result, for those taking a deontological approach to ethics a good outcome cannot be justified by a wrong action". (Campbell & Marshall, 1999, p. 466) "Consequences are of course important, but the rightness of action from the perspective of what is found to be morally 'good' or 'right' is crucial to the legitimacy of public planning, and therefore an attempt is often made to translate 'what is the right action' into procedural rules and principles for what is fair, justice, individual rights, and the form of public democracy". When interviewed planners raised the question of the 'right action', they referred to the importance of reflecting on the way they were governing others and using their more powerful situation over other participants. Considering that, "the right action is crucial, because planners' moral commitment is to fight for the interest of the 'common good'". The role of planners is to make sure no particular interests emerge in the planning process but 'all' interests are satisfied. Therefore, they should pay attention in their actions to giving a voice to the 'least favored': "what is morally important is to plan in such a way that the results in principle

contribute to maximizing the welfare or benefit of all affected, but especially those with no or minor power to influence planning decisions”. (Pløger, 2004, pp. 59-60)

- This deontological approach focused on giving a voice to the most disadvantaged leads to advocacy planning. Advocacy planning here does not mean that planners take side for one group over another; rather it is about planners acting as representatives and “providing an institutionalized ‘back-up’ or ‘defense’ of weak public interests [...] against strong economic interests”. For example, planners should make sure that all citizens have access to good quality public spaces in the city, they should reject the idea of ‘gated communities’, they should secure equal access to good housing regardless of which part of the city people live in. This illustrates “how a strong egalitarian ideology frames planning politics and planning practice in Norway”, while planners should not be blind to the reality of socioeconomic divisions in the city. (Pløger, 2004, pp. 60-61)
- Planners in Norway rely very much on the planning juridical procedures and legally binding land-use plans to legally solve conflicts when necessary. They see these documents as “power tools that public planners can use to secure ‘common’ interests versus ‘economic’ interests”. They do not question the efficiency and rationality criteria that these documents rely on, but rather support the fact that these binding documents allow them as defenders of the ‘common good’ to control and steer planning processes: “the rules, regulations and procedures of planning are seen as *the* way to improve planners’ power to represent common interests and manage the implementation of what is politically thought to be ‘the common good’”. Planners should be responsible, predictable, honest and fair in order to guarantee the legitimacy of planning, which depends on “whether citizens view planning as ‘good’, ‘upright’ and ‘objective’. [...] In the end, then, the usefulness and efficiency of planning depends on civil servants emerging as trustworthy, in terms of politics, practice and communication”. (Pløger, 2004, pp. 61-62)

Pløger’s (2004) has provided us with some examples of ethical values planners might value in their practice of planning. Campbell & Marshall (1999) offer a more general framework of ethical values associated with each style of planning. They identify three main themes related to ethics in planning: “the distinction between teleological and deontological frames of reference” (p. 466), the focus of concern of the ethical action and the interests served by the ethical action.

The first theme was already discussed by Pløger (2004) explaining how Norwegian planners take a deontological approach to ethics, that is to say with a focus on the planning process. The teleological approach focuses on outcomes or consequences of the process; “a good public policy, therefore, would maximize individual pleasure” and “the most frequently adopted method to measure the goodness of consequences is cost-benefit analysis”. Teleological approach can therefore be associated with the rational-comprehensive planning style described before. In contrast, the deontological approach concerned by whether a process is good or bad “results in focus being placed on individual right, fairness of approach and justice; concepts which are often in turn translated into procedural rules”. (Campbell & Marshall, 1999, pp. 466-467)

The second theme that relates to ethics in planning regards the focus of concern of the ethical action: can we identify universal ethical principles that would guide action? Or should they be considered as relative and subjective depending on the experiences and circumstances? (Campbell & Marshall, 1999, pp. 467-468) This could be extended to the universality versus relativity character that is given by planners to a planning process or solution. Given the fact that rational-comprehensive good solutions in planning are objective and backed up by facts, the same calculation could be exported to other contexts, tending towards the will to find universal solutions to problems.

The third theme concerns the question of which interests are served by the ethical action, that is to say “the perspective from which ethical actions are judged”. Rational-comprehensive and incremental planning styles both place the individual at the center of interest. Communicative and advocacy planning styles, in contrast, focus on the ‘common interest’: “individuals [...] are morally engaged with the communities of which they are a part”. (Campbell & Marshall, 1999, pp. 468)

The following table, to be interpreted with care, provides information about the association between these key ethical principles and each planning style.

Planning styles Ethical principles	Rational-comprehensive	Incrementalism-pragmatism	Communicative	Advocacy
Ethical reasoning				
▪ Teleological	x			x
▪ Deontological		x	x	x
Focus of concern				
▪ Universal	x			
▪ Relative/subjective		x	x	x
Interests served				
▪ Individual	x	x		
▪ Community			x	x

**Table 4: Key ethical principles associated with different planning styles**  
(Adapted from Campbell & Marshall, 1999, p. 469)

This framework might be considered to be a little bit too theoretical and difficult to use in practice. It might indeed be delicate to ask a planner during an interview if s/he values a teleological rather and a deontological approach in her/his work. Some value-revealing questions might be easier to use. Sager (2001) provides examples of such questions to the attention of planning agencies; the values promoted by an agency can be classified according to the same four planning styles described earlier (p. 521). We argue here that some of these value-revealing questions might also be asked to planners and uncover information about the planning style(s) or professional identity(ies) they might correspond to (see Table 5).

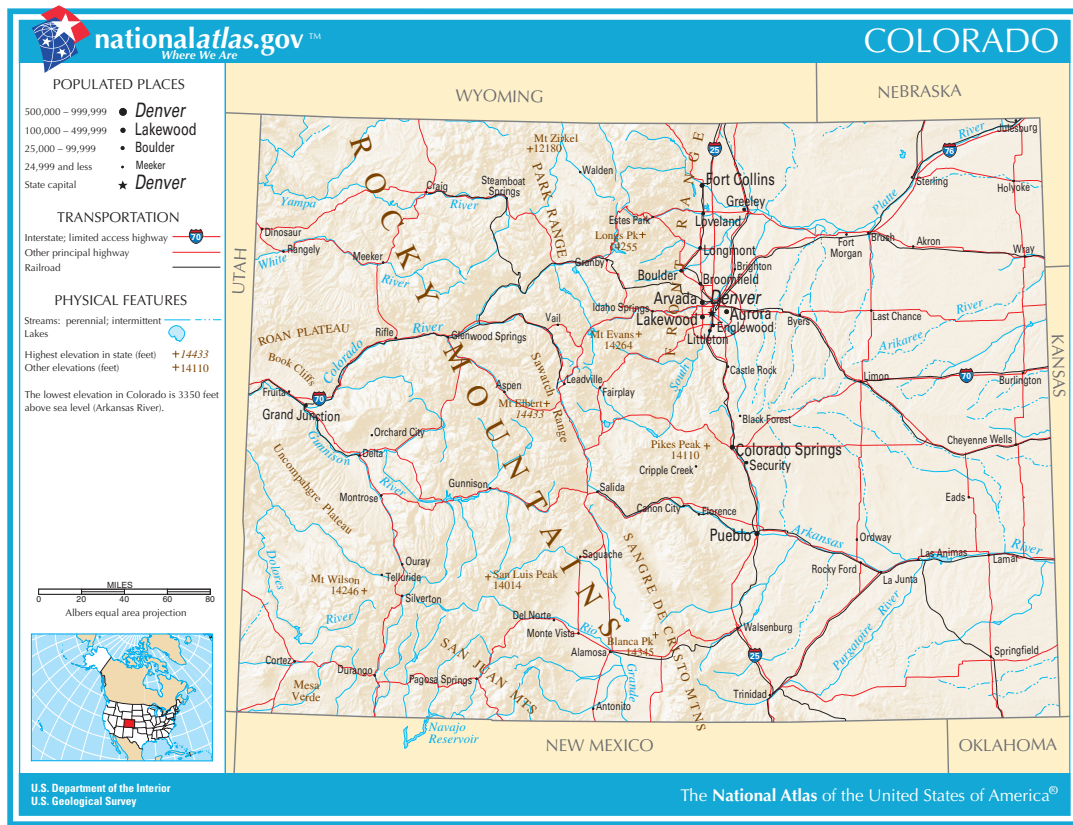
Value-revealing questions	Rational-comprehensive	Incrementalism-pragmatism	Communicative	Advocacy
1. What is the agency's main contribution to society?	Identification and analysis of the best solution seen with professional eyes.	Identification and implementation of whatever there is agreement about.	Stronger democracy based on deliberation and procedural fairness.	Fighting exclusion and giving an expert voice to the weak.
2. What should be achieved by a process run by the agency?	All information is made available to the planner through coordination with other interests.	Mutual adjustments and workable compromise.	Mutual understanding: decisions without humiliation and disrespect.	Weak groups are included in the process, and their needs are put on the agenda.
3. What wrongs are most important to rectify?	Low effectiveness owing to unprofessional problem-solving and political quarrelling.	Stalemate yielding unsatisfactory outcomes to the parties.	Power-based distortions of the public debate on plans.	Weak groups are not listened to and do not benefit from planning decisions.
4. What constitutes a good solution to a planning problem?	Objective, knowledge-based solution.	Correctable, agreement-based solution.	Legitimate, dialogue-based solution; consensus if possible.	Solution satisfying the client group.
5. Who is at the center of attention, and why?	Experts, because of alleged knowledge and impartiality.	Negotiators, because of ability to determine what is realizable in practice.	Mediators, because of their ability to find common ground.	Underprivileged groups, because they are most in need of assistance.
6. What is the planners' main commitment?	Effectiveness, professional ethics.	Pragmatism, safety-first ethics.	Participation and dialogue, discourse ethics.	Loyalty to the client group, hence partisanship.
7. How does the agency attain its social goals?	Analytic and calculating skills, professional excellence.	Management of uncertainty, flexible adjustment to contingencies.	Free and critical questioning and managing attention.	Argumentative support and empowerment.

**Table 5: Examples of value-revealing questions and answers according to planning styles  
(Adapted from Sager, 2001, p. 521)**

## 4 Cases presentation

The purpose of this chapter is to provide background information about the cases studied in this project, which will be useful when reading the following findings and interpretation chapter of the report. A factual presentation of the planning context, interviewed planners and respective planning agencies will now be provided, while the next chapter is dedicated to the interpretation of the planners' stories.

The four planners I have interviewed for this project are based in Colorado, USA. As shown on Figure 5, the state of Colorado is part of the American Southwest. On a geographical point of view, the state of Colorado is divided between the Rocky Mountains to the west and the edge of the Great Plains to the east. A large part of the cities in Colorado, such as Fort Collins, Denver or Colorado Springs, is located at the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, on a North-South line.



**Figure 5: Colorado location and physical maps  
(The National Atlas, 2010)**

A few facts and figures about Colorado can be found on Table 6 here below:

Capital city:	Denver
Population (2010):	5,029,196 inhabitants
Area:	268,431.26 km <sup>2</sup>
Density:	18.73 inhabitants / km <sup>2</sup>
Median family income (2009):	\$ 69,591

**Table 6: Facts and figures about Colorado  
(E-Sources: US Census 2010; American FactFinder; American FactFinder 2)**



In order for the reader to understand the context in which the interviewed planners work, a short introduction to the US planning system will now be provided. This will be followed by the presentation of each planner and the planning organizations they work for.

## 4.1 Urban planning in the USA

Contrary to European countries such as England or Denmark, there is no national planning system in the United States. While the federal government is designated by the US constitution as the authority to control foreign relations, interstate commerce or federal tax levy, it has no direct jurisdiction over local planning. However, it can influence them through indirect planning mandates such as environmental impact studies, pollution regulations or protection areas. On the other hand, the state is in charge of allocating rights, including planning, to municipalities or counties who then create planning commissions in charge of developing comprehensive plans. Yet, the state retains planning power through executive agencies such as economic or transportation departments, and special planning authorities concerned with ports, parks, etc. In addition, the private sector also develops plans, “usually focusing on land use, transportation, redevelopment or capital expenditures for specific areas”. The context of planning in the US is therefore characterized by its pluralism, as both formal and informal mechanisms coexist in the capitalistic society, as mentioned in the introduction (Chapter 1). (Birch, 2005, pp. 331-334) This idea about the American planning tradition is formulated as well by Fishman (2000):

“The ‘wonders’ of American planning almost invariably take place outside any well-defined administrative structure. They are the product of ad hoc commissions, special authorities, private-public partnerships – all of which tend to blur the lines between federal, state and local jurisdictions and between the private and the public” (p. 5)

### 4.1.1 Metropolitan Planning Organizations

Through different funding programs, the federal government exercises some control over local jurisdictions. It is the case for urban transportation planning, supported by Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs):

“A Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is a transportation policy-making body made up of representatives from local government and transportation agencies with authority and responsibility in metropolitan planning areas. Federal legislation passed in the early 1970s required the formation of an MPO for any urbanized area (UA) with a population greater than 50,000. MPOs were created in order to ensure that existing and future expenditures for transportation projects and programs were based on a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive (3-C) planning process. Federal funding for transportation projects and programs is channeled through the MPO. Note that some MPOs are found within agencies such as Regional Planning Organizations (RPOs), Councils of Governments (COGs), and others.” (US DOT, 2007, p. 3)

A MPO is defined as having the following five main functions:

- “Establish a setting: Establish and manage a fair and impartial setting for effective regional decision-making in the metropolitan area.
- Identify and evaluate alternative transportation improvement options: Use data and planning methods to generate and evaluate alternatives. [...]
- Prepare and maintain a Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP): Develop and update a long-range transportation plan for the metropolitan area covering a planning horizon of at least twenty years that fosters (1) mobility and access for people and goods, (2) efficient system performance and preservation, and (3) good quality of life.
- Develop a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP): Develop a short-range (four-year) program of transportation improvements based on the long-range transportation plan. [...]
- Involve the public: Involve the general public and other affected constituencies in the four essential functions listed above.” (US DOT, 2007, p. 4)

In the state of Colorado, there are five Metropolitan Planning Organizations, found within the following agencies:

- Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG);
- Grand Junction / Mesa County MPO;
- North Front Range MPO (NFRMPO);
- Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG);
- Pueblo Area Council of Governments MPO and Transportation Planning Region (PACOG). (US DOT, 2011)

Two of the planners I have interviewed for this project work for one of these agencies: one for DRCOG and the other one for PPACG. These two agencies will be presented in details later on, along with Boulder Municipality and Golden Municipality, for which the other two planners work.

#### 4.1.2 Colorado state mandates on local jurisdictions in terms of planning

As described above, there are no federal mandates on local authorities in terms of town and country planning. The state is in charge of it, and usually does so by mandating the agencies to prepare a Comprehensive Plan, also known as Master Plan. This implies that “the language will undoubtedly vary from state to state; it might even differ as to which agency or body is responsible for the development of the Comprehensive Plan” (Cullingworh & Caves, 2009, p. 126).

As far as what this project is concerned, Colorado Revised Statutes (CRS, 2010, 31-23-206) require that each municipality with a population of 2,000 persons or more, through its planning commission, prepares and adopts “a master plan for the physical development of the municipality, including any areas outside its boundaries, subject to the approval of the governmental body having jurisdiction thereof, which in the commission's judgment bear relation to the planning of such municipality”. The master plan shall show the planning commission's recommendations regarding various areas, such as land use, public utilities, water, building permits, housing, recreational and tourism uses, etc. In



addition, the master plan shall be submitted to public hearings prior to its adoption by the commission.

Furthermore, Colorado Revised Statutes (CRS, 2010, 30-28-106) also advise that each county, through its county planning commission, prepares and adopts “a master plan for the physical development of the unincorporated territory of the county”. The content of this plan is similar to what is described above for the municipality master plan. However, the adoption of such master plan by a county is only authorized, not mandated.

A municipality or county’s planning commission is also authorized to adopt a regional master plan, which then becomes an official advisory plan for such municipality or county.

## 4.2 The interviewed planners and their organizations

The four planners I have interviewed for this project will now be presented, in the order in which I first met them, along with the planning organizations they work for.

### 4.2.1 Jill Locantore, AICP, Senior Planner, Customer Resource and Support, DRCOG

All the information that follows is derived from the two interviews I conducted with Jill Locantore, which transcriptions can be found in appendices B-1 and D-1, unless noted otherwise.

Jill Locantore is a senior planner at DRCOG, certified by the American Institute of Certified Planners (the American Planning Association’s professional institute) in charge of the planning services team since 2009. She leads a team of three planners and reports to the Customer Resource and Support division director. Before she arrived at DRCOG in 2006, she worked at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government (Washington DC) on the transportation planning side for about two years. She grew up in Colorado, but went to California for her undergraduate degree in psychology and ended up in the Washington DC area to take her master degree in community and regional planning.

The planning services team at DRCOG is in charge of the growth and development planning of the Denver metropolitan area, that is to say that they plan for the long-range growth of the area, through the development and the implementation of the Metro Vision plan. This plan coordinates the federal transportation investments, which DRCOG gets because of its MPO status, with future growth and development, environmental issues and the incorporation of the needs of older adults. The last update of the current version of the plan, Metro Vision 2035, was adopted in February 2011, with a focus on the incorporation of sustainability in the plan. The update process took about two years, during which a pretty extensive public outreach was organized to allow the community define what sustainability meant for them and transform these visions into goals. Jill Locantore was heavily involved in that process, as will be described later on in the report. In addition, the planning services team has other responsibilities, that Jill organizes into three main areas: (1) the development of the regional plan and associated policies, (2) their implementation, (3) doing research to get feedback on the implemented measures and on the larger context of the metropolitan area.

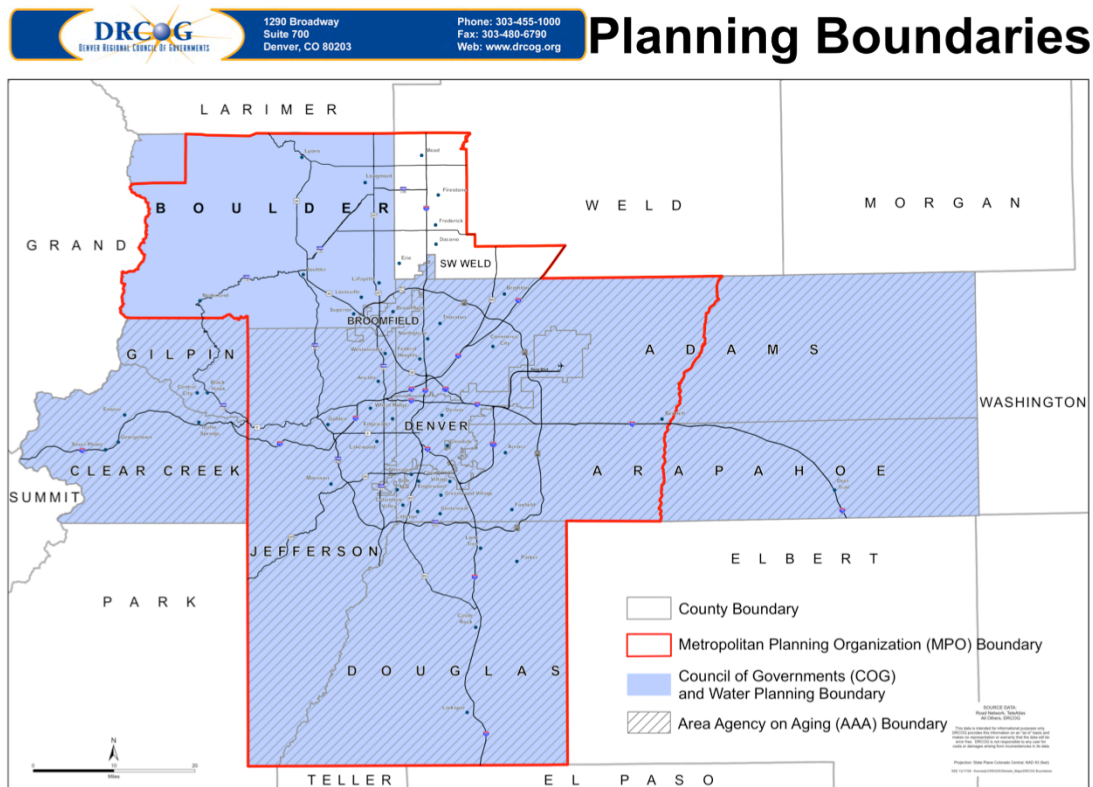
In total, 9 counties and 47 municipalities are participating in the Denver Regional Council of Governments. The three main activities of DRCOG are organized into three divisions: (1) Transportation Planning and Operations, (2) Area Agency and Aging and (3) Customer Resource and Support. In support of these three divisions, there are a Policy Development and Communications department, and an Administrative, Finance and Executive Director Office department. The director of each of the three main divisions reports to the executive director, who then reports to the board of directors that is made up of elected officials from all of the member governments. The Customer Resource and Support Division is made up of the planning services team that Jill Locantore leads, a socio-economic modeling team, a travel modeling team, a transit oriented development team and a member services team (that does for example elevator inspections for the local governments).

A few facts and figures about DRCOG can be found on Table 7 here below, and the different planning boundaries of DRCOG are shown on Figure 6.

Major city:	Denver
Population (2010):	2,798,757 inhabitants
Area:	8,808.55 km <sup>2</sup>
Density:	317.73 inhabitants / km <sup>2</sup>
Median family income (2009):	\$ 79,371
Total annual revenues (2010):	\$ 16,531,803
Political representation: board of directors	57 members, diverse

**Table 7: Facts and figures about DRCOG**

(E-sources: US Census 2010; American FactFinder – Other sources: US DOT, 2011; DRCOG, 2010)



**Figure 6: DRCOG Planning Boundaries (DRCOG, 2008)**

### 4.2.2 Jean Gatza, AICP, Sustainability Planner, City of Boulder

All the information that follows is derived from the two interviews I conducted with Jean Gatza, which transcriptions can be found in appendices B-2 and D-2, unless noted otherwise.

Jean Gatza is an AICP certified planner and works part-time as the Community Sustainability Coordinator at the city of Boulder. She has been working for the city of Boulder for about 14 years. She originally comes from Kentucky, but came to Colorado to study for her undergraduate degree in political science, and her master degree in planning. Before she became the community planning coordinator, she was working full-time at a different position, to ensure inter-departmental coordination on diverse topics, such as the capital improvement's budget or the master plans.

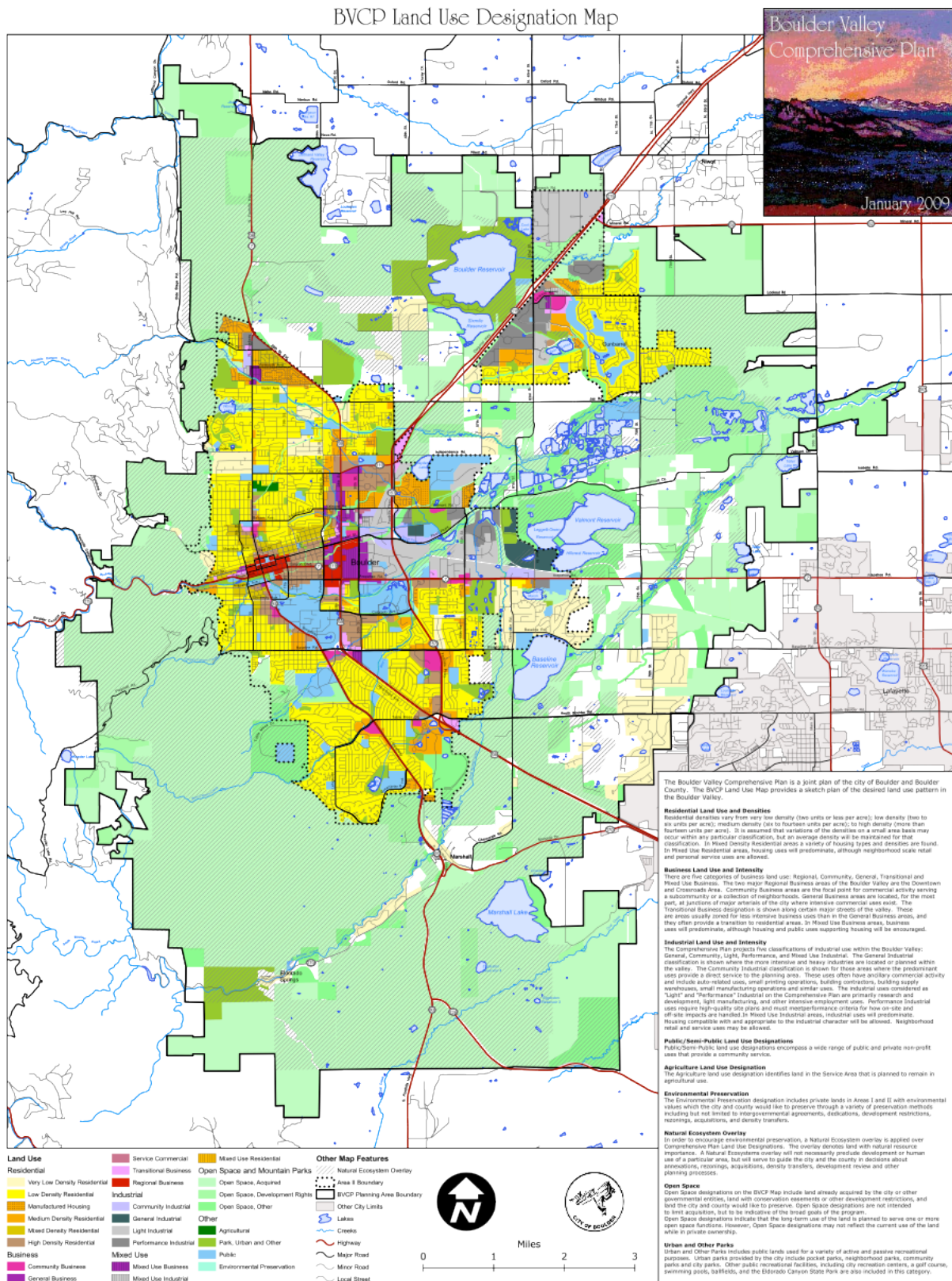
As the community planning coordinator now, she does not have anybody reporting to her, and reports to the head of the comprehensive planning department. She is in charge of helping with the community dialogue. As such, in 2007 she was heavily involved in community dialogue efforts, which were organized around an extensive quantitative survey sent out to the community and meetings-in-a-box, a tool allowing groups, organizations, neighbors to hold meetings on their own at their convenience. This allows the city council to get a general overview of the community's opinion about the city services, quality of life and other general issues. A similar effort will be conducted again at the end of this year, but probably only through a community survey. In addition, the last update of the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan – a plan that is jointly adopted by the City of Boulder and the County of Boulder – was initiated in early 2010, which also required input from the community. This was made possible through public meetings held in different communities, with different forms to match the characteristics of each community at the best, and through focus groups made of members of representatives of the different communities. For this project as well as for all the other planning projects, Jean Gatza is involved to help on defining the best community dialogue strategy.

As far as the context in which these different projects happen is concerned, the city of Boulder is located to the North-West of Denver, and is part of the Boulder County (see Figure 6). It is a pretty wealthy community, with housing cost much higher than in the rest of the metropolitan area, but there is also an unseen poor community (a higher than the national poverty rate). Potentially up to 50,000 people commute everyday to the city for work. In fact, Boulder attracts a lot of high technology, creative or marketing companies. They have around 15 federal scientific laboratories, for example for climate and atmospheric research, and very big companies such as IBM are also big employers for the city. Additional information on the city of Boulder can be found in Table 8 and Figure 7.

Population (2010):	97,385 inhabitants
Area:	65.79 km <sup>2</sup>
Density:	1,480.24 inhabitants / km <sup>2</sup>
Median family income (2009):	\$ 92,413
Total annual revenues (2011):	\$ 224,912,000
Political representation: city council	9 members, unaffiliated

**Table 8: Facts and figures about Boulder City**

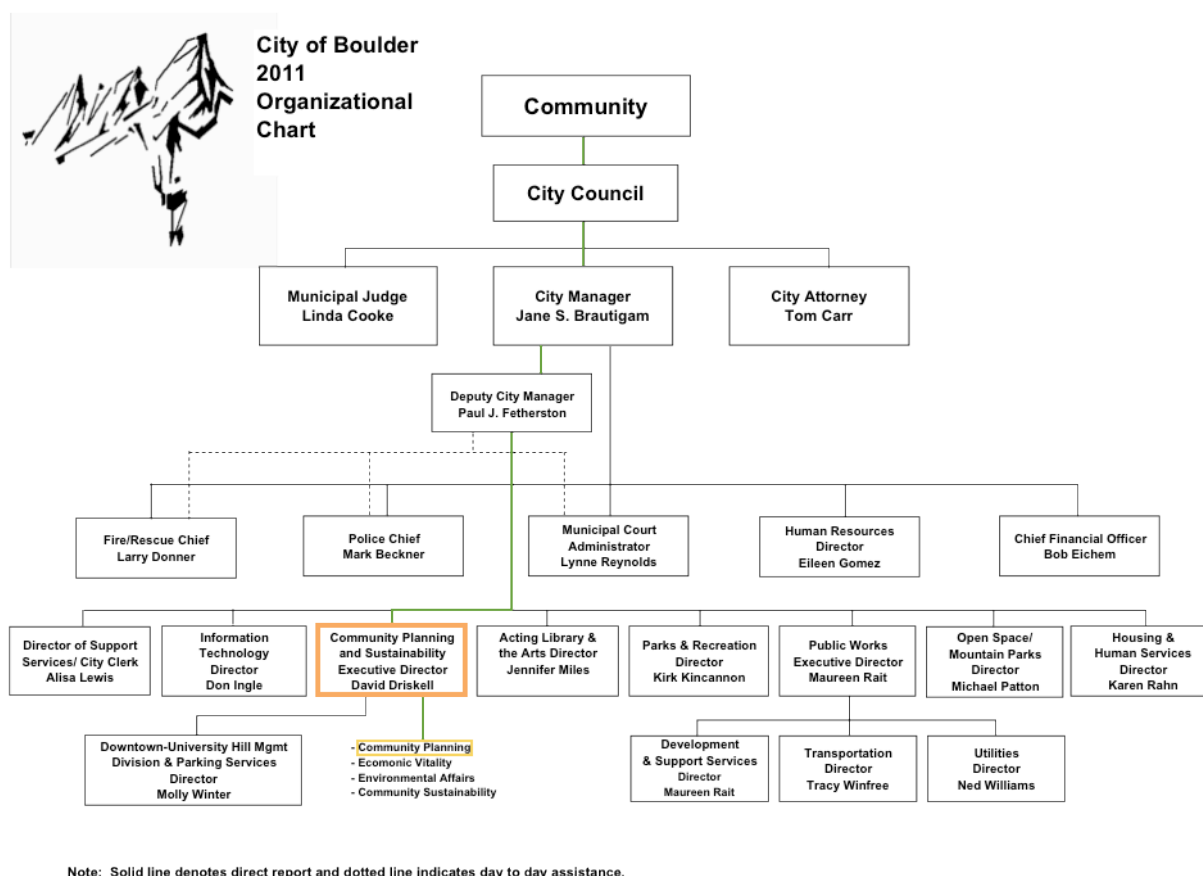
(E-sources: US Census 2010; American FactFinder – Other sources: US DOT, 2011; City of Boulder, 2010, p. 62)



**Figure 7: Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designation Map  
(City of Boulder, 2009)**



The city of Boulder organizational chart is presented here below. On this document, the comprehensive planning department where Jean Gatzka works is named community planning, and is under the authority of the community planning and sustainability executive director. This executive director reports directly to the deputy city manager and city manager, who relate directly to the city council. Furthermore, in addition to the city council, the community planning and sustainability division also work very closely with the planning board, which is not shown in the chart. In fact, there are advisory boards for many different areas, such as transportation, environment, affordable housing, human relations, etc. These advisory boards are there to advise the city and city staff on issues and plan proposals related to their specialty. They are made of volunteering citizens; therefore their involvement adds another layer of citizen input in the governance system of the city. As far as the planning division is concerned, the planning board is their primary advisory board, but they also work closely with other boards as planning is concerned with many different issues. This governance system is called a council-manager form of government, and is a typical city form of government in the US At the city of Boulder; seven citizens sit on the planning board.



**Figure 8: City of Boulder 2011 Organizational Chart  
(Adapted from City of Boulder, 2010, p. 5)**

### 4.2.3 Steve Glueck, AICP, Planning & Development Department Head, City of Golden

All the information that follows is derived from the two interviews I conducted with Steve Glueck, which transcriptions can be found in appendices B-3 and D-3, unless noted otherwise.

Steve Glueck is an AICP certified planner, head of the planning and development department at the city of Golden. He leads a team of three planners and one planning technician, and reports to the city manager. He has had that position for the last 20 years. Before that, he was working for a nearby city for 10 years. He is originally from Michigan, and moved to Colorado to go to university. He has a master degree in planning.

The planning and development department works on issues concerning comprehensive and neighborhood level planning and policies, historic preservation, economic development (attraction and retention of job in the city, promotion of tourism) and building permits. In addition, the team was heavily involved in the last two years in a project called Golden Vision 2030, which aim was to describe who is Golden as a community and to identify community values. In order to do so, the city of Golden received a grant from the Orton Family Foundation and worked with them on a strategy and different techniques to get input from the public. In the summer of 2009, the city organized block parties in different neighborhoods and targeted other community events. After a review of those stories, they translated them into a report organized around two guiding principles and nine value themes and used it to update the Comprehensive Plan that is out for review now. The collaboration between the Orton Family Foundation and the city of Golden will end in June 2011. As a last sub-project of the Golden Vision 2030, Steve and his team are working at the moment on ways to sustain the community efforts, for example through more interactive electronic communication or through guiding the non-governmental community services organizations to create a tight network to support the community and its values.

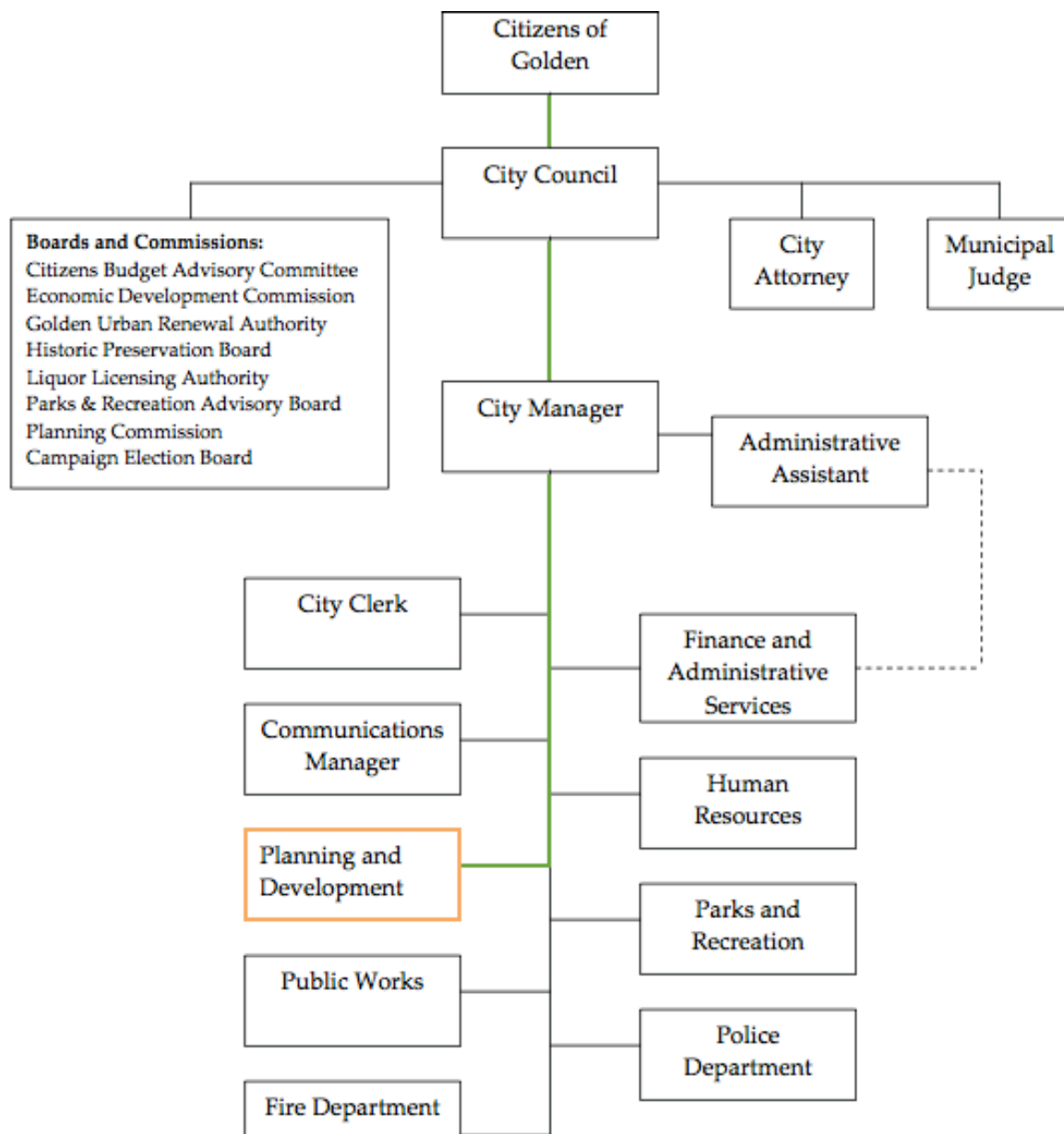
As far as the context in which these different projects happen is concerned, the city of Golden is located to the West of Denver, and is part of the Jefferson County (see Figure 6). It is surrounded by open space to the West, North and East, and by another community to the South East, making it impossible for the city to expand. It is a fairly wealthy community, with housing cost around 10 or 15% more expensive than just East of the city. In terms of jobs, the city is a mix between high technologies, manufacturing and some services sector. The city also has a small university, some Jefferson county offices and a youth detention center. Additional information on the city of Golden can be found in Table 9 and Figure 10.

Population (2010):	18,867 inhabitants
Area:	23.31 km <sup>2</sup>
Density:	809.40 inhabitants / km <sup>2</sup>
Median family income (2009):	\$ 79,940
Total annual revenues (2010):	\$ 49,800,876
Political representation: city council	7 members, moderate to liberal

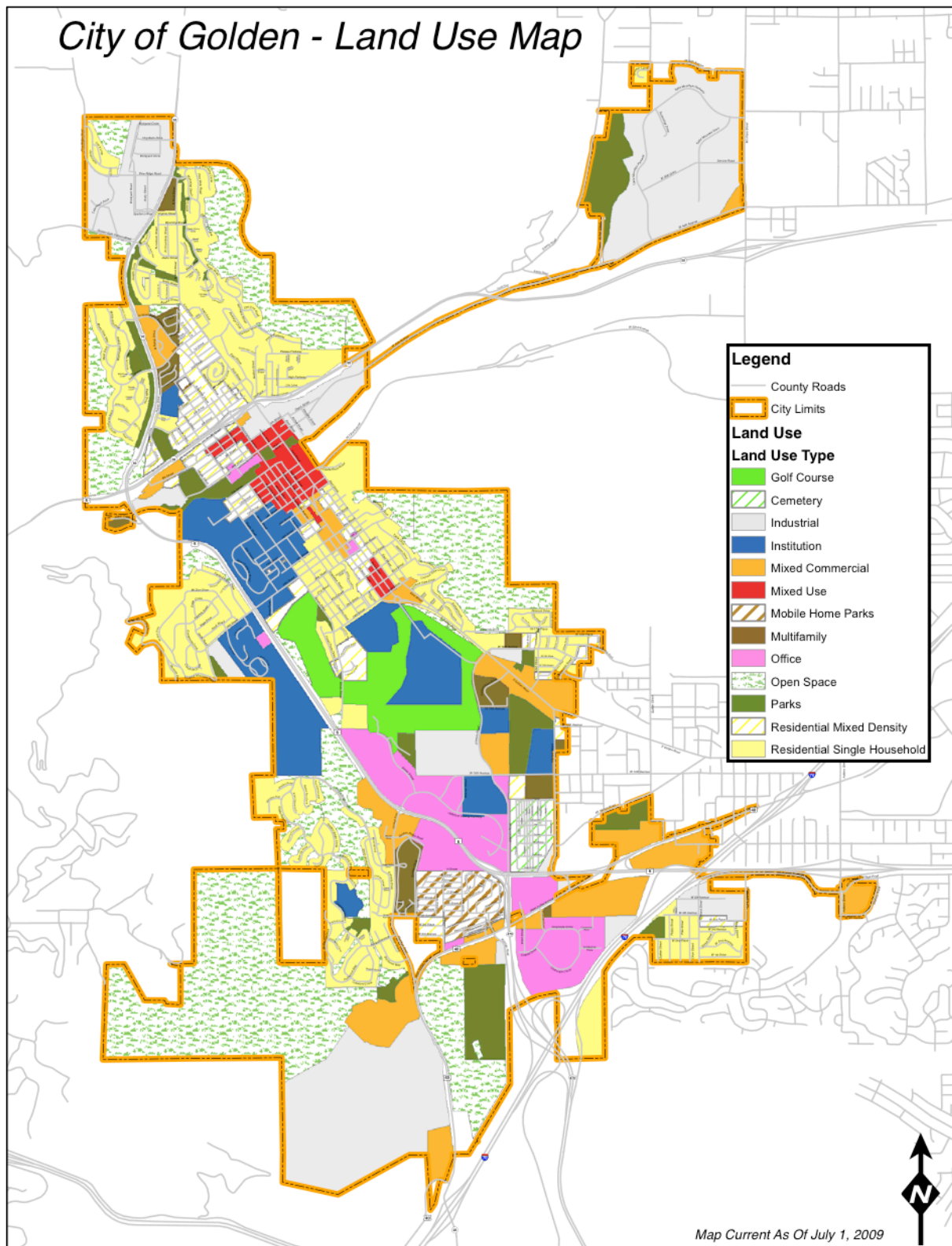
**Table 9: Facts and figures about Golden City**

**(E-sources: US Census 2010; American FactFinder – Other sources: US DOT, 2011; City of Golden, 2010)**

As shown in the organization chart here below, the governance system for the city of Golden is also a council-manager form of government. The advisory boards and commissions are shown to be directly in contact with the city council, but they also work very closely with the different city departments. At the city of Golden, seven citizens sit at the planning commission.



**Figure 9: City of Golden Organization Chart**  
(Adapted from City of Golden, 2010, p. 28)



**Figure 10: Land Use Map for the city of Golden  
(City of Golden, 2009)**



#### 4.2.4 Rich Muzzy, Environmental Program Manager, PPACG

All the information that follows is derived from the two interviews I conducted with Rich Muzzy, which transcriptions can be found in appendices B-4 and D-4, unless noted otherwise.

Rich Muzzy is the Environmental Program Manager at Pikes Peak Area Council of Government. He has been working as such for about 12 years. He does not have anybody reporting to him, and reports to the executive director. He is originally from California, and moved to Colorado to go to university. He has a bachelor degree in economics and environmental studies from the university of California in Santa Cruz, and a master degree in watershed science from Colorado State University.

His principal job at PPACG is to work on water and air quality issues; he is in charge of developing a water quality management plan for the region, and of making sure that they meet the federal and state air quality standards of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s criteria pollutants. Rich is also working on implementing smart growth tools while stimulating economic growth, and helping out with the long-range transportation plan. In addition to this, Rich is very involved in working on the Sustainability Plan that the agency launched in 2010. As described on PPACG's website, the idea was to spearhead "a cooperative effort with regional stakeholders and local governments to foster regional sustainability dialogue and to develop a long-term sustainability plan for El Paso and Teller counties. The purpose of the plan is to address sustainability in a regional context and help bring together and build upon all the existing sustainability efforts" (PPACG, 2011a). This plan is being developed in two phases. Phase 1 was completed in December 2010, and aimed at developing 20-year sustainability goals for the community. Phase 2 is now ongoing with the aim of developing strategies to ensure that the goals are achieved within a 20-year timeframe. Thus, the Sustainability Plan project should be achieved by mid-2012.

As far as the context in which these different projects happen is concerned, PPACG gathers together the three counties of El Paso, Teller and Park and the 13 municipalities included in them. Being also a MPO, PPACG's main source (around 80%) of funding comes from federal sources for transportation projects. The rest of PPACG's revenues come from the state of Colorado (10 to 20%) and from the membership dues (less than 10%). An important part of the territory is occupied by the military base of Fort Carson, making military impact planning a very important component of the agency. It also influences the socio-economic character of the area, as the military wages are quite low. So one of the challenges the region has to face is to actually match the housing needs to the salary ranges of soldiers. In addition to transportation, environmental and military planning, PPACG also has an Area Agency on Aging, as shown on the organization chart on Figure 11. However, this organization chart does not show that each of the departments has technical committees related to their area of interest, and formed by technical staff from the cities or counties or other stakeholders. Furthermore, the Community Advisory Committee, made of citizens from the different cities and counties participating in the COG, provides input and recommendations to the board of directors regarding all the different plans and policies that PPACG is working on. Additional information about PPACG can be found on Table 10 and Figure 12 here below.

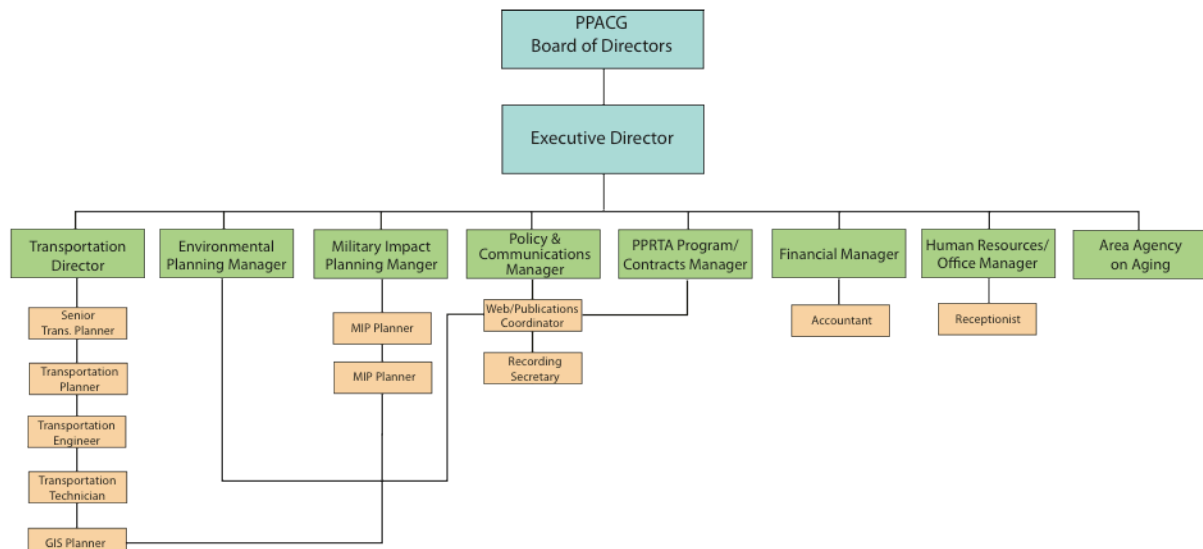


Figure 11: 2010 PPACG Organization Chart  
(Email from Rich Muzzy)

Major city:	Colorado Springs
Population (2010):	661,819 inhabitants
Area:	2,064.22 km <sup>2</sup>
Density:	320.61 inhabitants / km <sup>2</sup>
Median family income (2009):	\$ 67,695
Total annual revenues (2010):	\$6,021,665
Political representation: board of directors	31 members, republican

Table 10: Facts and figures about PPACG

(E-sources: US Census 2010; American FactFinder – Other sources: US DOT, 2011; PPACG, n.d.)



Figure 12: PPACG Boundaries  
(PPACG, 2011b)

## 5 Findings and interpretation

In this chapter, the qualitative data collected during the series of interviews conducted with the four planners is presented, analyzed and interpreted. In order to do so, the case presentation chapter is referred to as important background information that helps understand the context in which the interviewed professionals practice planning; the theoretical framework elaborated in chapter 3 is used as a structural guide on which the analysis lies; the interpretation of the findings follows the hermeneutical approach described in the methodology chapter. The purpose of this work is to provide some answers to the research challenges raised by the problem formulation developed in the introduction.

The research is focused on the central theme of public participation in urban planning. As mentioned before, three topics around this theme and the interconnections between them are more particularly studied: (1) the ethical and moral values expressed by planners; (2) the planners' definition or opinion on the role they should and do play as professionals; and (3) the different community engagement projects that they are involved in. The aim is to highlight the relationship between the community engagement strategies developed by planners and what they express in terms of ethics, moral and professional identity (or role). In order to uncover what each planner's story tells us about these topics, the same framework as the one elaborated in the theory chapter will be used: first we will analyze the reasons for which planners say they use public participation and community engagement in the decision-making process and we will learn about the different strategies they employ to do so; second we will try to identify elements in their discourse that reveal who they are as planners and what style of planning they practice; finally we will attempt to interpret their stories in terms of key ethical principles and moral values that might influence community engagement practices.

In order to keep the text fluid and easy to read, the interviewed planners will be referred to by their first names: Jill (App. B-1 & D-1), Jean (App. B-2 & D-2), Steve (App. B-3 & D-3) and Rich (App. B-4 & D-4). All the interview transcriptions can be found in Appendices B (first contact interview transcriptions series) and Appendices D (second contact interview transcriptions series).

### 5.1 Public participation in practice

In the recent years, public participation has become a guiding principle for better decision-making processes in the public realm, and is seen as a means to counteract the crisis of representative democracy. However, this is not the only reason why citizens are requested or willing to get involved in public decision-making. Understanding the role and purposes attributed to a community engagement process by those who designed it is indeed necessary in order to assess what benefits and outcomes could be expected from it. Therefore, prior to detailing the different techniques and strategies for public participation employed by the interviewed planners and their agencies, we will now present their justifications for citizen involvement in planning.

### 5.1.1 Rationales for participation

We have learned in the theory chapter that rationales for public participation often suggested in the literature can be classified into six categories: (1) it is a legal requirement; (2) it is part of the new urban governance agenda; (3) it represents an opportunity for information exchange between local authorities and the public; (4) it is a way to take advantage of the public's competence; (5) it produces a better outcome; (6) it advances fairness and justice. However, as we will now notice, this might not be an exhaustive list of reasons to engage the public and planners might consider various reasons valid.

The first information that can be drawn out from the interviews is that planners do not spontaneously use the fact that public participation is required by law to justify it. Although they are aware that there are regulations for certain processes, they usually employ other techniques than the ones mandated by law, as summarized by Jean: "certain processes have either within chartered or on regulations a specified path of public involvement. We almost always do different things" (App. B-2, p. 4). The reason for this behavior might be that planners find the current regulations on public participation in planning obsolete and ineffective. Though they still have to comply with regulations, they are looking for better ways to involve citizens:

"At the other end of the spectrum, one thing that's interesting is that different states in the United States seem to have different opinion about legal requirements for participation, and even different cities. And it's all theoretically based on the constitution: there are some due process protections in the US constitution, 5<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> amendments. But Colorado is kind of a more conservative state. And so one of the dilemmas that we have is that the legal requirements for public participation require you to do things that aren't very effective and aren't very enjoyable. [...] For example, public hearings. And a public hearing is defined as a quasi-judicial process; it's almost like being in court. And so when the public comes in, their only participation is to testify, they don't get to have a conversation with either staff or the decision-maker, planning commission or city council, or the person that wants to build something on the property close to them. They only get to make a speech to the decision-maker. It's a very awkward way to do business. [...] [And also] it's at the end of the process. So the ways that we try to make the system better are kind of, in spite of the formal process that right now has to occur at the end because of law, to create more informal conversations earlier on" (App. B-3, pp. 3-4).

Steve highlights here a contradiction in the Colorado constitution: although it is declared that public participation produces better government (see chapter 1), the current regulations rely on traditional methods for public participation such as public hearings, where the public is not viewed as a 'peer' in the decision-making process but rather as a 'trouble-maker'. The only way for someone to participate is to "testify" almost as if he was "in court", which might be very intimidating and to say the least dampening; furthermore the public has an opportunity to provide input only "at the end of the process", when the decision might already be made. It can already be sensed that this might not be the ideal solution to involve citizens in the decision-making process, and Steve informs us of his will to "create more informal conversations earlier on"; the next section will provide details about

the ways he attempts to do so, along with additional critiques on the techniques for participation mandated by law. In the meantime it can be concluded that the regulations are certainly not what pushes planners to work collaboratively within their communities.

The second rationale for public participation opposes two visions of democracy: representative government versus participative governance. In the former the public's opinion is shared through elections and taken for granted for the duration of the political term; in the latter the decision-making process is open to the public and various stakeholders independently from elections. In reality the line between these two ideas can be blurred, as both modes support some forms of participative practices. But there is still a value difference in the way the public is viewed, and the 'old-fashioned' vision of representative democracy still echoes in regional planning, as explained by Jill:

"There are some people who think that because our board of directors is made up of elected officials, they essentially represent the public, and there is no real need to reach out more broadly to a larger public. I think some of the elected officials kind of take for granted that nobody really knows that they serve on this board of directors, because they are not elected directly to serve on DRCOG, they are elected to their local city council or kind of commission, and then the council of the commission chooses a representative to come serve at DRCOG. So a lot of the constituents don't know that they have an elected official serving at this regional body, and so they don't know that there are those decisions being made, and that they should have a voice in it. So there is not a lot of clamor I think for public involvement, and it makes it easy for the board to just carry on and adopt this attitude of 'yes, we are representing our constituents and there is no need to do any additional outreach beyond that'. As you might have guessed, I don't quite share that perspective" (App. B-1, p. 4).

DRCOG's board of directors, to which Jill ultimately reports, is made up to elected officials from the 56 member governments (see chapter 4). There are no regional elections during which the public would vote directly for regional elected officials that would represent them in a regional government. As mentioned by Jill, this leads to a lack of transparency in the regional governance, for the public doesn't know that "there are those decisions being made" and elected officials forming the board do not feel they could seek "additional outreach" beyond their representative mandate. The public is therefore considered mainly as voters rather than as partners in the decision-making process. Jill actually is of the complete opposite opinion: she thinks that the regional planning agency status of DRCOG, which doesn't provide them with any coercive planning mandates such as zoning, increases the need for stakeholder and public involvement:

"... Especially when you are talking about regional planning for things like growth and development, we don't have the ability to zone, we don't have any development review authority, it's the local governments and the private sector that are actually shaping the future of this region. And if they don't feel ownership over this regional vision and this regional plan, why are they going to help us into that? [...] Where our power comes from is by focusing attention and gaining buy-in into the regional plan. And if the plan belongs solely to our board members, why would anybody else feel any ownership of it, care

about it, or be motivated to try and help make it come to reality? [...] And I think the more possessive we are with our plan, like 'this is our plan, do you like it?', the less interested people will be, the less relevant we are to the region" (App. B-1, pp. 6-7).

She adds that the federal money that they, as a MPO, are in charge of allocating to transportation projects usually serves as a 'carrot' to get people sit together at the negotiation table; however this 'carrot' is getting smaller and smaller so they have to find other ways to foster collaboration between the different stakeholders. Therefore she sees community engagement in planning as a necessity to gain "buy-in" and "ownership over this regional vision and this regional plan". Rich, who also works for a regional planning agency (PPACG, see chapter 4), shares the opinion that they should seek public buy-in for their plans and sees it as a way to avoid coercive regulations and policies, which might not be very popular (App. B-4, p. 9). Finally, Steve also links public participation to new urban governance and argues:

"It's actually for your own protection [...] and support. Political support. It is all some version of politics. That's what they call local politics. If you want people to support what you're doing, you need to involve them in understanding it" (App. B-3, p. 8).

These reasons for involving the public in the decision-making processes – creating a sense of community buy-in and ownership over a plan and winning public support for political decisions – might seem much more pragmatic than Arstein's (1969) ideal of citizen empowerment. However, it doesn't make them less valid as planners have to be realistic in assessing the purpose of a community engagement process. For example being able to win public support of a plan guarantees some sort of stability for the community as they might be less inclined to vote the elected officials down at the next election if they are satisfied with policies that have been implemented.

All of the interviewees have used the third rationale for public participation – information exchange between the public and local authorities – to justify it. First, it enables the planning agency to share information and educate the public about a plan or policy, as Rich (App. B-4, pp. 8-9) and Steve argue: "but also one of the biggest parts of public participation, if it's not a big controversy, is just the communication part, for folks to know what you're doing" (App. B-3, p. 8). More importantly, it represents an opportunity for the public to share their opinions that can afterwards be reflected in the plans and policies developed by the agency: "we want to make sure we develop a plan that expresses the needs, the concerns, the desires of the community and more important doesn't sit on the shelf" (App. B-4, p. 7; see also for example App. B-2, p. 6). It is important for the planners to question their communities on their views, perceptions and comments in order to make sure they work in the right direction and develop policies that correspond to the aspirations of the public, as Jean explains:

"I feel better informed and better able to do the work that I do when I've been outside this building and I've been out talking to people, and riding my bike in the streets, and going to meetings, or just hearing to what people have to say because it gives me a better sense of what this community's about" (App. B-2, p. 4).

By going out to meet people, Jean gathers information about them that will help her do a better job. Thus, the public is believed to possess local knowledge that is useful to the planners and only accessible by engaging in a conversation with them. Here we are approaching the fourth rationale, which is the recognition of the public competence as a first step towards genuine interaction and consensus-building; however debate and deliberation with the public were not expressed as explicitly by the planners as being the purpose of public participation.

Jill, Jean and Steve unanimously believe that involving the citizens and stakeholders in the decision-making process will result in a better outcome. They express it as follows:

“I think the decisions will likely be better if we’re listening to people, and getting a better understanding of the different perspectives, the different aspirations and concerns of the people that live in this region, and own businesses, and are trying to do development in this region. If we listen to them, we’ll have a better understanding of what the current situation is, and make better decisions” (App. B-1, pp. 6-7).

“I think that the decision-makers need to hear from a wide variety of people. We need to hear from them, it makes it a better product. Also we’re doing the work for the community, what they want the community to be like, and what they want. [...] It’s so intrinsic in what we do, to make sure that we’ve checked in with people and make sure that we’ve given them a voice” (App. B-2, p. 4).

“The quality of decisions will be better, and the way that the representative system works is that the people support the decisions that the representatives are making. And so the danger of not having public participation is decisions made by a smaller group of people over time will tend to always be guided by their bias and their experience. So whereas individual decisions may be very valid and the right decision, over time the totality of decisions will not be as good as if you had a broader input. So quality of decisions” (App. B-3, p. 8).

Because they “work for the community”, involving the public in the decision-making process is “intrinsic” and enables them to make decisions of “higher quality” and “better product(s)”. The planners do not question the usefulness of public participation in planning; it is an important part of their job and something that is even evident. On a slightly different angle, Rich also shares this opinion but with a focus on the fact that public participation guarantees that change happens and the implementation of a plan is successful:

“Public opinion is critical to making sure that there is success in the eventual implementation of a plan. Because it’s going to be the public who’s responsible for the behavior change that’s going to [show] that we achieve the goals. Because if you don’t have the public buy-in for a 10% reduction in greenhouse gases, how are you ever going to get there? You’re going to go ahead and probably force regulations and policies on them, and that’s not going to be too popular” (App. B-4, p. 9).

Contrary to the other planners, Rich works as an environmental planner; for example he has to implement policies regarding greenhouse gas reduction or water conservation, which necessitates a change of behavior from the constituents and stakeholders in his jurisdictions. Therefore, he has a



more pragmatic opinion about public participation, for that he keeps in mind his objectives and the reality of the situation. Even though he believes changes happen through public outreach and education, he notes: “unfortunately I think, most of the actual big changes are made through changes in policies. And that’s just kind of the way it is” (App. B-4, p. 9). We will discuss in the next sections whether he tries to influence the processes to incorporate broader public participation, or if he has resigned himself to accepting the situation as it is.

The sixth rationale for public participation mentioned in the literature relates to the right to participate and to advancing fairness and justice in the city, especially for the least advantaged groups. This seems to be the main reason for Jill to advocate broad public participation in planning. In fact, she is very active in engaging her community, and not just people who are used to be involved:

“And I think that people who live here and who will be affected by the plan very much have a right to have a say, a meaningful say in the process, not just an opportunity at the end at a public hearing to make some comments that likely won’t make much difference. So since I’ve been here, I’ve been pushing to be a little bit more aggressively in our public involvement, engaging a broader group of people and not just the usual suspects, and giving them opportunities throughout the process, not just at the end” (App. B-1, p. 4).

Because planning decisions affect the livelihood and quality of life of people, they have a right to participate in these decision-making processes. Just as Steve mentioned it, Jill also criticizes here the legal requirement of public hearing at the end of the process. In the next section, we will be able to read about the ways she seeks to engage the least advantaged groups of population, and “not just the usual suspects”. As far as Jean is concerned, she recognizes that reaching to the underrepresented groups of the society should be an aim, but she highlights one of the difficulties associated with that:

“It’s always a challenge, we keep trying different things, a lot of the goals in here are about reaching out to those that are underserved or don’t typically participate. We don’t always get a lot of participation of the lower income, or immigrant groups, well they don’t have time, and we understand that. So we’ve been trying harder to find ways to go to them and make it easier. But at a certain point, you keep going” (App. B-2, p. 4).

She reminds us that engaging the whole community in the decision-making process is an ideal, and that in reality it implies that some groups, issues or outcomes have to be excluded from the process. Rich adds a dimension to this phenomenon, saying that sometimes people purposely choose not to get involved:

“I think it’s hard to try to get them represented. Because for the most part it’s a conscious decision on their part not to become engaged. [...] But I think the reality of the situation is that people in general are just so busy and hectic in their day-to-day lives that they just don’t just have time” (App. D-4, p. 9).



In relation to that, Rich also adds that a lot of the times, people who choose to participate in a decision-making process are already convinced. For example if you organize a sustainability conference in order to develop a sustainability plan, the people who will get involved largely support the idea of sustainability and what it requires in terms of efforts from their part (such as reducing their car usage); therefore it's like "preaching to the choir" and you don't get a balanced review of citizens' opinions. (App. B-4, p. 7)

Another difficulty associated with public participation has been brought up both by Jean and Steve. It relates to the timeframe of citizen involvement. In fact, both of their planning agencies carried out pretty extensive and innovative community engagement projects in the recent years (the details will be provided in the next section), but they now question the follow up of these projects and the fact that people might either expect that these relationships are maintained in time or that their recommendations are followed to the letter without wanting to participate more, because they have already made very significant efforts:

"And so the downside is that it's very hard to keep public participation on-going. We were pretty good to keep people interested for about a year, and then after that they weren't so much interested". (App. B-3, p. 4)

In addition to these six rationales for public participation, Jean and Steve also highlight that public participation is especially useful in times and areas subject to change either gradually or suddenly (for example an area where a new transit station is going to be built). For Jean, it is a way to help people confronted to a situation of change that they might be afraid of and feel threatened by:

"It's just trying to anticipate people's needs though. Because when you know it's going to be controversial, you know it's going to be hard for people, you make sure that you structure it in a way that they can feel heard, get the right information, not be dominated" (App. B-2, p. 9).

Especially when it is "controversial", it is expected that people might feel resentment towards a project or even the planning agency. In those cases especially, people first need to be able to express their animosity and be heard, and then to be properly 'educated' about the situation without feeling that they are being manipulated. Steve adds that it is particularly important to inform people about the way the system works, so that they can more easily react in an efficient (and legal) way when they are affected by a project:

"The areas that have a lot of change in them, the citizens are actually pretty good at understanding the decision-making process and knowing how best to participate in that. It's the area where you haven't had any change in your neighborhood for a long time that first time something happens, then none of those people understand the system and the rules and the legal sides of regulating the land-use. And generally you'd prefer to be in that situation where you haven't had a lot of change and controversy in your neighborhood, but the bad thing then is you don't know how to use the system" (App. D-3, p. 3)

Thus, public participation plays an important role towards people confronted for the first time to a change in their neighborhood. Steve also sees it as an opportunity to create dialogue within the community, not just between the community and the local authority; for example, people who have been confronted to change in their neighborhood would share their experience with people who will be in the same situation. The planning agency should find “ways to help the community talk to itself” and enable each “household to have a better understanding about the community’s future and what it can be” (App. D-3, p. 6). This idea of knowledge and value exchange between the citizens was not cited in the literature on which the theoretical framework of this project was based; however if the local authority has a role to play in getting members of a community to get to know each other and be able to live together, it seems very important that it does so. Of course it can be a matter of scale, as Golden has a population of ‘only’ around 19,000 inhabitants, so they might be in an easier position to influence neighborhood’s life than Jill who works for a region where almost 3 million inhabitants live.

To conclude, the following table summarizes the different rationales used by the different planners to justify public participation and stakeholder involvement in the decision-making process. Although planners are generally in favor of public participation for different reasons, they remind us of the difficulties of applying it in practice. In the next sections, we will be able to learn about the ways they overcome these problems and engage their communities, which might provide some indications on their motivation and enthusiasm in that regard.

Rationales for public participation	Jill	Jean	Steve	Rich
New public governance	Gain buy-in and ownership over the regional vision and plans		For your own protection Win public support for political decisions	Seek public buy-in for their plans to avoid coercive regulations and policies
Information exchange		Top-down publicity, communication, education Bottom-up sharing of views and opinions		
Public competence		Access local knowledge to do a better job Develop a plan that reflects the community’s needs and desires		
Better outcome	Make better decisions	Make a better product Work for the community Intrinsic in the job	Better quality of decisions	Enable change to happen Successful implementation of a plan
Advancing fairness and justice	People have a right to have a meaningful say Reach out to the underserved	Engaging the whole community is an ideal		

Rationales for public participation	Jill	Jean	Steve	Rich
Especially helpful in times of controversy		Help people confronted to a situation of change	Inform people about the way they can participate	
Opportunity for dialogue within the community			Opportunity to create dialogue within the community	
Difficulties		Issues of exclusion How to keep public participation on-going?	How to keep public participation on-going?	Issues of self-exclusion and 'usual suspects'

**Table 11: Planners' rationales for public participation**

### 5.1.2 Strategies for participation

After having set the aims of a public participation and stakeholder involvement process, planners decide of the best strategy to engage their communities and of the set of techniques they will use to achieve the goals. The different methods of participation can be classified in four broad categories: (1) traditional, where the public is informed and has a limited input; (2) customer-oriented, where the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the public is measured; (3) innovative consultation, where the public's input is gathered through innovative methods; (4) innovative deliberation, where decisions are taken in collaboration with the public. The planners I have interviewed for this project all have different stories about participation strategies to tell, depending of the projects carried out by their agencies or they have personally been involved in.

Prior to detailing some of the techniques employed in practice, it should be noted, as mentioned in the previous section, that the planners all criticize traditional techniques mandated by law for being ineffective and unattractive to the public. For example, Jean remembers a conversation she once had with a citizen about public hearings:

"We know that different people don't feel comfortable engaging in certain ways. I'll never forget this woman telling me 'there is no way that I am going to go to council chambers and stand up and give my name and address in front of a bunch of people that disagree with me about something, I'm not doing that'. I was like 'I don't blame you, I don't want to do that either', that's not giving people a good way to voice their views. It's very structured, it's very hierarchical, and a lot of people don't feel like standing or wanting to do something like that. I have to spend a lot of time in council chambers, it's not my favorite place either" (App. B-2, p. 7).

Participating in a public hearing seems to be very intimidating, and places citizens who have something to say systematically in an oppositional position in regard to the council or board making the decision. Unless somebody really feels threatened about a project, it is therefore difficult to imagine that s/he will put her/himself in such a situation although s/he might have some interesting comments to make or input to provide. Rich also takes the example of press releases, “which have limited effectiveness”, because people usually do not provide comments unless they are very directly affected by the plan (App. D-4, p. 6). Therefore, even though these techniques are still employed at the end of the process because it is required by law, planners design participation strategies in which other techniques are preferred to fulfill the goals they have defined.

In early 2011 DRCOG adopted an update of their Metro Vision plan that focused on the incorporation of sustainability into the plan. It was the result of a two-year extensive public outreach project, which aimed at getting the community define what sustainability meant for the region and which sustainability concepts and goals should be included in the plan. Jill “was heavily involved in that process of first getting the public input, and then working with the board and their various committees to work through developing specific policies to incorporate into the Metro Vision plan” (App. B-1, p. 1). The sustainability goals were developed through three stages: first, members of the public were invited to participate in ‘Sustainability Cafes’; second, the outcomes of the Cafes were reviewed by DRCOG’s board of directors; third ad-hoc groups were called to draw conclusions. Thus, participants of the ‘Sustainability Cafes’ were members of the public whom Jill invited:

“I had an essence of who the leaders were in these different areas, from living and working in the Denver region, and paying attention to who were the different advocacy groups or interest groups that were active in different areas. Also asking them: ‘I’d like to reach out other organizations that work on similar issues, do you have recommendations for who would be good to invite?’. So I started for a form letter that I customized for each person I wanted to come and sent it to them, and those I didn’t hear back from I was calling and pestering. Especially people who’ve never heard of DRCOG, or maybe they’ve heard of DRCOG but they don’t really know what we do, or they don’t really see how it’s relevant to them, it takes some extra prodding and encouragement to explain to them why they might be interested and why it’s important to DRCOG to get their input, why it’s important to the region” (App. B-1, p. 5).

Jill therefore made important efforts to target groups that were not aware of DRCOG’s activities and were not used to participate in urban planning projects before, as she believes they very much have a right to do so and planning agencies should aim at reaching out to the underserved. She managed to get over a hundred people outside of the ‘usual suspects’ involved in the ‘Sustainability Cafes’ with the aim of defining sustainability goals for the region. This technique, usually called ‘World Cafes’, enables a large group of people to come to a consensus through three rounds of discussion: during the first round, people sit at tables by groups of 5 or 6, discuss the questions; then they move and randomly resort themselves into different groups and discuss the same questions, and do that one more time. This allows them to “kind of cross-pollinate the conversations that way and they can start in these groups identifying ‘these are common themes that I heard on the other table’, and then share that back out to the large group” (App. B-1, p. 4). 30 common themes emerged from those conversations and were then submitted to the board of directors, which picked about half of them

that seemed to correspond to their vision and they were comfortable with. Finally, ad-hoc groups formed by local planning staff from the member governments were formed to work through these themes and develop six sustainability goals and supporting policies and strategies to include in the Metro Vision plan. Therefore, “you could trace [the six goals] pretty directly back to the initial input” of the public (App. B-1, p. 5), which enables saying that the sustainability vision for the Denver region was actually developed directly by its communities. This strategy, combining innovative deliberation between members of the public with a review by the board and collaborative work between staff from the member governments, represents an example of how collaborative planning can work in practice. It demands extensive efforts and time to organize, but as Jill highlights, it can be very “successful on that people keep pointing to it as ‘here’s an example of where we did a better job of engaging the public and that’s the kind of thing that we could replicate and do again’” (App. D-1, p. 2).

Even though she says that since this project, “public engagement has been much less extensive, falling back on just that last step of having a public hearing before we actually adopt a plan” (App. B-1, p. 3), Jill is always trying to develop new participation tools. In fact, they are working at the moment on using an interactive website called Metro Quest to raise public awareness on different heated topics and enable the users to explore, vote and observe the consequences of different planning scenarios. This tool is much more sustainable in the sense that it doesn’t use so much resources to implement. At the moment, the results have just been shared with the board but the tool hasn’t been tight with any specific plan or policy. However, Jill is hoping to use it at the primary form of input during the next update of the Metro Vision plan.

Jill is also very active in collaborating with different stakeholders on different projects. For example, they organize ideas exchange forums on a regular basis, where a panel of speakers (local governments members, private sector representatives, national experts, etc.) comes to share their experience and interact and discuss with the audience. This allows the different stakeholders to learn from each other and think about ways to ‘export’ best practice experiences in their communities. She is also working on a more exceptional process at the moment: DRCOG is trying to set a numeric goal concerning water conservation, which is a very controversial issue in this part of the country. They have been trying for a number of years but until now failed to come to a consensus. Therefore, Jill has opened a ‘water conservation dialogue’: she hires an external facilitator to organize the process with the different stakeholders. Here again, it will be done in three phases: after having identified who are the people concerned with this issue, the external facilitator will do one to one interviews with key stakeholders in order to understand what their concerns are; then the external facilitator will form a small group of stakeholders that will work on designing the process; finally the larger group will be called to try and build a consensus.

To conclude on Jill’s actions, we can note that for each project, her priority is to work collaboratively with stakeholders and the public, especially the underrepresented groups when possible. With the help of her team, hierarchy and eventually professionals, she develops custom strategies that match the needs and goals of each process. She tries to increase her financial limitations by seeking grant funding from the federal government and private funds. She tries to avoid traditional methods of participation and concentrates generally on innovative consultation or deliberation methods.

Within the scope of community sustainability, a community dialogue is organized in the city of Boulder, which phase 1 happened in 2007 and phase 2 will happen at the end of this year. The purpose of this dialogue is to get a “citywide [...] [and] general overview of what people think”, outside of any plan revision. As the sustainability planner, Jean was involved in the outreaching engagement effort. In fact, the participation strategy for phase 1 of the project involved two elements: a survey carried out by mail among the community by an external consultant, and a series of ‘meetings-in-a-box’ held by citizens. The concept of ‘meetings-in-a-box’ is that individuals, organizations or business groups host self-directed meetings, without any member of the local authority being present. People are asked to discuss a specified topic and to provide feedback to the planning agency afterwards. In the context of the sustainability dialogue, the purpose was to get citizens’ opinions about their quality of life, values, visions and city services in Boulder. The inhabitants were provided with the possibility to carry out these meetings in Spanish as well as in English. In fact, the council “really wanted to hear from groups that [they] don’t usually hear from. That’s why [they] did the meetings-in-a-box and [they] really worked hard to recruit groups, organizations, neighbors, just people, to hold those meetings. [Jean] thought they were really good and [they] learned a lot from them” (App. B-2, p. 6). Although they were very successful, only the community survey will be carried out for phase 2 of the community dialogue. The reason for this, according to Jean, is that the ‘meetings-in-a-box’ outreach efforts are very resource consuming and the city doesn’t have the same budget for the community dialogue this year. However, the city will investigate further if they notice ‘surprises’ in the survey results. This strategy of participation can be seen as customer-oriented, in the sense that it aims at collecting opinions, suggestions or complaints about the city services.

In addition to this, the Boulder Comprehensive plan is being updated every 5 years, and the last update process started in the fall of 2009. It began with a series of meetings, where speakers would come and talk about matters such as the big issues Boulder would be confronted to within the next years or the topics they should focus on in this update. In addition, people were asked for input and comments, and also were provided with the opportunity to vote instantly on the issues:

“One of the tools that we just gained with the Com Plan update, we got these clickers, these instant keypad polling, and that was really interesting. So you do the presentation, and you can ask people questions, and you can see right in the room, immediately what people think. For these meetings, nothing was that controversial, but I’ve seen this in the past when you got a couple of vocal minorities, people that are really loud, then it gives people voice that don’t want to stand up and say ‘I disagree with you’, ‘oh, ok, half the room thinks this, half the room thinks that’. So it’s a set of constitutive for some different dynamic. We’re looking forward to using those in different ways” (App. B-2, p. 9).

In addition to these meetings, a workshop was also carried out using the ‘World Café’ method. Both the meetings and this workshop were very successful and enabled the city to get a lot of great comments from the community. After this stage, the city wrote briefing papers about what had happened so far and “got a lot of different representatives from different community organizations involved as a focus group to do a review before [the city] put them out [to the public]”, which “failed miserably [because] hardly anyone paid attention to them” (App. B-2, p. 4). Therefore, they decided

to group all the issues that needed input from the public – such as energy, wildlife, the Com Plan update, historic preservation – and hold meetings under one banner called ‘Boulder Matters’:

“We held these 5 meetings where we had different focus areas, we had all these different topics, so people could come, we had a pancake breakfast one time, we went up to Chautauqua [park] where the kids could come and paint pumpkins, we had one in the senior center where we did a planning 3D presentation, it was kind of fun. So we were trying to really just make them find an interest in and try to mix up, you know if someone’s coming for the mountain lion and bear planning, then maybe they’d get information on these other projects too [...]. So it was all these topics that would have had their own meetings, we thought ‘let’s just do it at once, have people come and try to get information’. We did staggered presentations, the pancake one was really fun, it was a beautiful Saturday morning, I think that was why everybody was out biking. However we didn’t have as many people as we were hoping. [...] The first couple had between 20 and 30, and then it grew, so I think we had 60 or 70 at the next 2, and the last one we had over 100. But still, for a lot of topics, we were hoping that we would draw a little more. Because it’s a lot of staff time, a lot of preparation, but they were fun and nice events” (App. B-2, p. 8).

Although these meetings didn’t attract as many people as they expected – they had been advertising them through many different channels such as newspaper, emails, flyers, the university, etc. – Jean still says that the city was very satisfied about the process of involvement and the input they got out of them. They are looking forward to doing it again this year and hopefully doing better in terms of the number of people who participate. The strategy of participation developed for the Com Plan update, involving many different methods to fit each phase and get appropriate input, is therefore oriented towards innovative consultation.

Finally, probably the less visible but very important public participation in Boulder’s governance system stands within the different boards and commissions that characterize the council-manager form of government. In fact, these are made up of citizens who volunteer and provide comments on all the projects the city staff works on:

“It’s a very important part of the public involvement. Because these are people that volunteer their time to help. And I would guess that they actively seek others’ opinions in decisions that they’re making. Like talking to their neighbors and friends and co-workers, ‘hey what do you think about that, this is what we’re considering, what do you think?’” (App. D-2, p. 3).

The boards and commissions can be considered as a place where deliberation happens between members of the public. These people are appointed by the city council and might not be representative in the sense that they are not elected; however they provide significant and systematic input in the city’s life and are citizens that are members of the same community. Therefore, in addition to developing custom strategy for each project – which is an intrinsic part of the planning agency’s job according to Jean, this level of public participation should not be ignored.



The city of Golden is also organized around the council-manager form of government; the same system of boards and commissions formed by volunteering citizens is used as referrals on the different projects. The city of Golden has participated since 2009 in a most unique project called Golden Vision 2030 and funded by the Orton Family Foundation. It aimed at getting the community to create a value and identity document for Golden that would serve at long-term guidelines for developing policies in the future.

“And this is based on the theory that, for thousands of years, the values of a society have been passed on through storytelling, and that if we collected stories about the community, it would help us learn what the values of the community are, and that could be an enduring guide for us as we dealt with policies. Policies generally change every 5 to 10 years when they’re updated, and the goal was that the values would be much longer term, that a value statement would be good for us.” (App. B-3, p. 3).

In order to collect those stories from Golden inhabitants, the city employed a whole range of different techniques: they hold block parties in the neighborhoods, with food, drinks and different services provided for free such as a veterinarian or a bicycle mechanic, to ensure a high participation level of the public; they joined community events and senior housing projects; they went to the local high school and worked with a video class who created short videos of their stories and other local leaders’ stories; they targeted groups that don’t usually participate in the normal process such as inhabitants from a large mobile home area and got them to tell their stories about the community. Thus, they tried to be very inventive in the techniques they used, in order to reach out to a large number of diverse people. Furthermore, all these events also created an opportunity for dialogue between the inhabitants, which Steve believes it is an important reason to carry out public participation. Once that stage of innovative consultation was over and they had collected hundreds of stories about the community, they recruited citizens to form about eight deliberative groups with 10 to 20 people in each to review those stories:

These focus groups were formed by “anybody that we could get. Literally. We put out requests through the city’s monthly hardcopy newsletter, and on the city website. Actually we got our boards and commissions [...] to do it. We tried to just solicit, we bribed them again with food and little gifts for people to come in, but all city residents [...] and some service organizations, [...] and there’s a faith-based organization of ministers that we got to do it, and some cultural organizations. It was work to get the focus groups formed. But they would come and they would listen to the stories, and then they would write down what values they thought were being depicted by what people were saying, they would view several video interviews, and then [...] they would try to come up with what they as a group felt were the strongest values coming out of these stories. And then at the community summit, we categorized these values and ended up with 11 value themes” (App. B-3, pp. 5-6).

Even though Steve says it was a lot of work to reach out to people, which was accentuated by the fact that the membership in the focus groups kept changing, they kept on trying and were very satisfied by the process and the different techniques used:



“They were really successful. [...] The measure of success was not only the number of people, we got a couple of hundred each time, but also that it was people that has not been involved before. That was a big goal” (App. B-3, p. 4).

However, once they had translated the results of these activities into a value report, they tried to get feedback from the community on this document through more typical methods (sending it “everywhere they could think of” (App. B-3, p. 4)), which didn’t work that well because people had been engaged for about a year and weren’t so much interested afterwards. The value report has now been adopted and used to update the city’s Comprehensive Plan. And that revision will be submitted to the public in the more traditional way of making it available on the website and sending it through emails; however, Steve suspects that they won’t get many comments about it, because people had put a lot of energy into the value documents and are not ready to get involved that intensively anymore, especially because the Com Plan update doesn’t include any controversial issues. This doesn’t mean that people do not care:

“And then what surprised me also was, the community now expects us to make all of our policy documents fit with our values document, but they don’t seem to want to participate in that creation of policy documents” (App. B-3, p. 4).

In order to employ less expensive and resource intensive, more sustainable public participation techniques and strategies, Steve and his team are now focusing on using social media and interactive electronic ways to engage citizens, with the help of the Orton Family Foundation. For example, there is a program called i-neighbors that is a sort of neighborhood blog, “where [they]’re trying to promote and create on-going communication in neighborhoods by neighborhoods” (App. B-3, p. 3). Here again, he is talking about encouraging dialogue between citizens. Another example that they are looking at using is the meeting-in-a-box technique, and to rely on existing organizations to support the community values:

“We’re working with a network of non-profits and community-based organizations to try to help them be the NGO version – the non-governmental version – of Golden Vision [...]. We hope that they really create a focus on the community for the Golden Vision value about volunteerism and belonging and taking responsibility for all of the community” (App. D-3, p. 4).

Therefore, the cooperation with the Orton Family Foundation enabled them to rely much less on community meetings or traditional methods that can be terribly “boring” (App. D-3, p. 5), but rather to concentrate on finding new and innovative consultation techniques to get people’s input and an on-going conversation within the community.

The most important public participation project that PPACG is working on at the moment is the preparation of a long-term Sustainability Plan for El Paso and Teller counties. This project is organized into two phases that follow the same process; phase 1 aimed at developing sustainability goals while phase 2 aims at developing the supporting strategies and policies to incorporate in the plan:

“The first phase was to develop goals that were for El Paso and Teller counties, 20-year goals, that were both aspirational and inspirational. That is, if we go along as a business as usual mode, we want to achieve these goals. It requires a change in behavior, changes in attitude, changes in how you both think and feel and having your actions, go ahead and change the directions so that these goals can be achieved. [...] And phase 2 is the development of the strategies. So looking at the goals, what are the strategies that need to be developed to ensure that the goals get achieved within that 20-year time frame? And also developing the background conditions, the baseline: where are we starting from and where do we want to be when we grow up? And the indicators for tracking the progress. So making sure that we’re headed in the right direction, because if we aren’t headed in the right direction, there might be some changes that we might want to go ahead and make” (App. B-4, p. 6).

The first step of this process was to form nine focus or technical groups that were externally facilitated to achieve constructive deliberation and dedicated to different areas: energy, water, transportation, military impact, arts, culture, education, etc. The focus groups are open to the public, but meet during the day:

“I just don’t know how to get around that. Because I don’t know how many of the people that come to our meetings during the day would show up in the evening time. So you probably wouldn’t get as many people showing up. So it’s somewhat of a balancing act” (App. D-4, p. 4).

Rich knows that the fact that the focus groups meet during the day automatically excludes a big part of the community; however, it doesn’t seem like there is an easy solution to that problem. The developed technical goals were then fed into a broad base consensus committee, also externally facilitated and formed by 20 to 23 elected officials and key stakeholders, who adopted them.

“It’s interesting seeing what happens in those meetings, because you’ll have people from the environmental groups, the home building association, and other groups trying to reach a consensus. It’s like ‘I don’t really like that, but I can live with it; I don’t really like this, I can or can’t live with that’. And eventually after a while, they come to some sort of common understanding, [...] not everyone’s happy but it’s something that they can live with” (App. B-4, p. 3).

Thus, Rich doesn’t believe in consensus-building in the sense that a consensus is reached when everyone is happy about the solution that was reached, which might not be what they had thought of before but something more innovative. Once the consensus committee had adopted the nine sustainability goals, the agency carried out a public survey to get an input both about the achievability and the desirability of each of those goals:

“And the feedback that we got was kind of pretty much all positive, certainly there were some goals that people felt more strongly towards both on the achievability and the desirability scale and others not quite as much. [...] But based upon those comments, we went back to the consensus committee and had a 4-hour meeting where we tricked

some of the goals based upon the public comments and concerns. And now we're moving into phase 2." (App. B-4, p. 6).

The public is therefore viewed more as customers whom opinions are quantitatively collected. Overall, even if extensive public outreach was not aimed at, Rich thinks the process has been pretty successful so far, although "you really can't tell until you're all done" (App. B-4, p. 8) and the strategies are implemented in practice, which might take at least a few years. Outside of the major plans such as this Sustainability Plan or a long-range transportation plan, public participation at PPACG is limited to more traditional methods, such as public meetings, press releases or 30 to 45 day public comment period as required by law, even though Rich acknowledges that these have limited effectiveness.

In the following table, one public participation strategy developed by each planner and her/his agency for one project that seems of particular importance is summarized. Each method employed within each strategy is defined through the groups or actors that were targeted and its prevailing characteristic, as I interpret it. This table is illustrative and should not be considered as being simplistic as it accompanies the above text. However, it might help the reader to get a clarifying overview of the content of this section, which will be useful in the next section. In fact, the rationales for public participation that the planners formulated, in addition to the strategies that they developed with their teams, give us indications about the way they frame their professional role, as will now be demonstrated.

Planner, agency	Project, Outcomes	Strategy	Target, actors	Characteristic
Jill, DRCOG	Metro Vision Update, Sustainability Goals and Strategies	1. Sustainability Cafes	Extensive public outreach, underserved groups	Innovative public deliberation
		2. Review	Board of directors	Stakeholders consultation
		3. Ad-hoc groups	Planning staff from member governments	Stakeholders collaboration
Jean, City of Boulder	Community Sustainability (phase 1), Satisfaction Review	1. Meetings-in-a-box	Extensive public outreach	Innovative public consultation
		2. Public survey	Community	Customer-oriented satisfaction
Steve, City of Golden	Golden Vision 2030, Community Values Report	1. Block parties, community events, etc.	Extensive public outreach, underserved groups	Innovative public consultation
		2. Focus groups	Extensive public outreach, underserved groups	Innovative public deliberation
		3. Public review	Community	Traditional consultation documents

Planner, agency	Project, Outcomes	Strategy	Target, actors	Characteristic
Rich, PPACG	Sustainability Plan (phase 1), Sustainability Goals	1. Focus groups	Limited public (day-meetings)	Innovative limited public deliberation
		2. Consensus committee	Stakeholders	Stakeholders consultation
		3. Public survey	Community	Customer-oriented review

**Table 12: Examples of public participation strategies**

## 5.2 The planners' professional identity and role

Even though the interviewed planners can justify public participation and stakeholder involvement for similar reasons (see Table 11), they develop and employ diverse strategies for public participation (see for example Table 12). These differences can be explained by many different reasons, such as: the communities for which these planners work are very different in size and style (see chapter 4) and the participation strategies are custom fit to each of them and each project; planners can choose between an almost infinite number of participation methods; the budgets that planners have at their disposal for organizing a public participation process might vary a lot for example between a 3-million-inhabitant region and a 660,000-inhabitant region or between a wealthy 100,000-inhabitant city and a balanced 19,000-inhabitant city. However, even if they all have different constraints, planners play an important role in designing the public participation strategies not only by choosing the techniques they will employ but also by choosing whether to engage citizens, how much staff resource to allocate to the project, what the expected outcome is, when and whom to engage and what type of information to communicate (see chapter 1). The purpose of this section is to attempt to clarify how the interviewed planners define their role as planning professionals and practitioners and what that implies in terms of the engagement of their communities in the planning process.

As mentioned earlier, Jill (DRCOG) makes public participation and stakeholder engagement in the planning process one of her top priorities in her work:

“It becomes a matter of prioritization, like you’ve got limited time, limited resources and staff, what do you devote it to? To me devoting it to stakeholder engagement is still or should be one of the top priorities for an organization like DRCOG” (App. B-2, p. 3).

For every new project, she tries to find an appropriate and efficient way to involve either the broad public or the different stakeholders, depending of the context:

“But basically just by making suggestions to the senior management at DRCOG and always bringing that in any project or decision-making process that we’re working through, always asking the questions ‘who are the stakeholders that should be in the room? How are we going to engage them? When in the process do we think it’s appropriate to engage stakeholders?’. A lot of times the answer I’ll get from the senior management is ‘we don’t need input from stakeholders’, or ‘there’ll be an opportunity

for them to come and testify at the public hearing’. Basically it’s just persistence on my part of just continually asking questions and continually suggesting strategies that I think we should adopt for engaging stakeholders and having these little successes like the sustainability café was a success” (App. D-1, p. 2).

She does so because she believes it ultimately enables making better decisions by better understanding the different perspectives. Furthermore, she thinks that people who have a stake in the project very much have a right to participate, and that engaging them will create a sense of ownership over the plan or policy among them, which is necessary to guarantee its successful implementation. She is able to push for her vision of planning since she has been promoted to the position she holds now:

“I started at a relatively low position at DRCOG and I’ve been working my way up. So I was only in a position where I could advocate for [extensive public outreach] and make it happen by the time we got to 2009. [...] So now I’m looking to hopefully continue to push the envelope and this conversation about water conservation is another example where I’d like to do that” (App. B-2, p. 2).

In order to “advocate” for public participation and stakeholder engagement, she has to convince the executive director and ultimately the board of directors – who are elected officials – as they are the decision-makers. She has tried different arguments for that. At the time of the Metro Vision Sustainability update, when she opened the process to the broad public, she focused on “people have a right to have input”; however, she doesn’t know “how much that resonates” (App. D-1, p. 4). Therefore, in the context of the Water Conservation dialogue, she’s trying to take a different tack:

“[It] is that we want our regional plan to be successful, we want it to be implemented, and DRCOG cannot do it by itself, we have to work with partners to implement the vision. And the best way to get partners engaged and working with us to implement the vision is giving them an opportunity to help develop the vision in the first place, so that they feel buy-in into that vision, and they feel like DRCOG’s vision is relevant to them, it’s not this irrelevant thing that DRCOG is doing over there” (App. B-2, pp. 4-5).

She is therefore emphasizing that the success of implementation of a vision or a plan depends on the concerned groups to find that vision or plan relevant to them, to feel buy-in, which is one of the rationales for participation she developed. In addition, she argues that, in the regional context of DRCOG, the board cannot achieve its missions alone and needs partners:

“It’s a conversation that [the executive director] and I need to have over time, like what’s the philosophical approach that are we as staff going to take to it? What are we going to propose to the board? Are we going to continue to say to the board ‘this is your plan, you have complete over what goes into it’, or are we going to say ‘in order to make this plan happen, you can’t do it alone, you have to have partners, so are you willing to allow partners to sit at the table and develop it with you, and give up a little bit of control?’” (App. D-1, p. 4)

She is suggesting that key stakeholders, such as economic corporations, local foundations, business community members, are invited, sit at the table and help steering the process, which means that the board has to cede some power. However, she adds that the board will be the only ones making the decision at the end by voting and that this is not called into question, which she will also insist on when trying to convince them. Bringing private partners into the equation is also a means to get them fund and support the process, so that it can be done “in a scale that will actually be meaningful” (App. D-1, p. 4). DRCOG being mainly funded by the federal government because it is an MPO, the majority of the budget is allocated to transportation. Applying for additional funding is therefore a means for Jill to gain autonomy and defend her projects in front of the board:

“I’m also always looking for opportunities to apply for grant funding, so that I’m not just begging from the general DRCOG budget ‘please can I have some money for public engagement?’. I’m looking for external grant funding so I can say ‘look I’ve got this money specifically for public engagement’” (App. D-1, p. 3).

It appears clearly that Jill is dedicated to finding ways to work in collaboration with stakeholders and the public. She tries to control the agenda and impose her view on the board. She places herself as a link between the elected officials and the public, she feels accountable to the board as they are the decision-makers, but more than anything she feels accountable to the public as she works for them:

“The elected officials are our bosses, in some sense we are accountable to them. But again I think it is a little bit of a philosophical approach to that. What does it really mean to be accountable to the elected officials? I think I’m ultimately accounted to the people of the Denver region; I’m planning for their future. I’m doing that by supporting the work of elected officials, but it doesn’t just stop with pleasing the elected officials. So I see part of my job as helping the elected officials do their job well by making sure that different stakeholders have an opportunity to inform the decisions that they’re making. You know, there’s definitely politics involved in that, and there’s often a disconnect, I think, between where the politicians are and where the public is. But it doesn’t help to shield the politicians from the public opinion, I don’t want to pretend like ‘oh yes, you’re representing the public, everything you say is exactly in sync with what the public is thinking’. I want to create those opportunities for a dialogue between the public and the elected officials” (App. B-1, p. 7)

In some sense, Jill can be considered as a ‘facilitator’ in the “dialogue between the public and the elected officials”. In addition, she also considers she has a role to play in balancing the board’s different opinions represented by elected officials belonging to different political parties:

“We include such a diversity of local governments [from] very liberal, very progressive [to] very conservative [...]. So the challenge is bringing all these people to sit down at the same table and find some areas of agreement. [...] But I think a lot of the communities are really more in the middle. We’ve got very loud voices on either end, and it’s kind of the electorate at large, there’s this whole group of swing voters who vote depending on how charismatic one version versus the other is. So part of our job is to help give that middle a voice, and help them develop their own opinions, not just follow the leaders on

one side or the other. Part of that I think can be through giving them input from their constituents” (App. B-1, p. 7).

To conclude, Jill advocates for public participation and stakeholder collaboration, tries to open the process to as large groups of people as possible, aims at giving a voice to underrepresented groups but without letting one’s interest predominate; she can therefore be considered as practicing planning in the communicative style.

In the city of Boulder, planners also try to figure out when and how to engage the public for every new project:

“We try to ensure that we have public involvement at every possible stage of a project. The challenge is getting appropriate input, being able to exchange information or ask the right question in a way that people want to engage, that we get people engaged, different organizations engaged. I think a lot of communities struggle with getting the same usual suspects involved in the planning processes, they are the same people that have been here for a long time and have been involved. But we’re really trying hard to reach more voices; we know that people are very limited on time they have to spend on things. So we try to do a lot over the web, we try to do a lot over the email, we try to go to organizations where they’re meeting, we do not expect that people can come out on evening and go to the senior center, and get their input, and stay engaged. It’s very hard. And unless something is really controversial, or very close, about their neighborhood or about joining property, people don’t really engage” (App. B-2, pp. 3-4).

Jean highlights that reaching out to people who are not used to participate is difficult. She is pragmatic in the sense that she recognizes that people won’t engage unless the project is happening in their backyard or the issue is very controversial, in which case the planning agency still has to carry on with the project. However, she still sees public participation as an intrinsic part of her work, as something evident to promote because she works for the community and it enables her to be better informed and to do a better job:

“In regard to the public, I think that we have all of our responsibilities to listen, to hear them, to work in their interest as community as a whole, not for particular individuals. The reason why we do this work is to improve and sustain the community as a whole, if not the wider community as well. We have to walk that line between the whole versus the one, and we have our attorneys that help us with that, but we also have to manage the here and now versus the future. And I think that that’s the best part of this job, it’s thinking about that” (App. D-2, p. 8).

Balancing the different interests in the city – individual versus collective, and present versus future – should therefore be part of a planner’s job. Yet the planner still holds planning expertise and technical knowledge, but should stay open and balance that against public input:

“There’s that balance of expert versus not expert, we have to balance that, we have to take our planning expertise, be able to provide information, ask questions, but we have



to be shaped by what people think. And I think you definitely see that in comparing plans and planning processes and planning outcomes around the country. Different places and different people want different things” (App. B-2, p. 4).

In the end, however, Jean feels accountable to the board in the sense that they are the ones who control and set the agenda. She does not try to impose her views on the board, she works for them, they are the bosses, and it can happen that they don’t follow the planning staff’s recommendations and their decisions should be respected:

“In regard to the elected officials, our role is to advise them, our role is to manage the work and to bring the work to them that they have desired from us, and give them professional analysis and a recommendation, and for them to take that and do with it what they will. Most of the time they agree with us and they do what we recommend, but sometimes they don’t. And that’s the process” (App. D-2, p. 8).

Finally, Jean’s position in the city of Boulder requires that she works closely with the different boards and commissions, who are formed by volunteering citizens, in order to find a consensus on the different projects she works on:

“We work both with planning board and city council very closely, they direct our work plan, we have check-ins, they approve the projects, but yes we work very closely. [...] Planning board’s our primary advisory board, but there are a lot of projects where we coordinate with the transportation advisory board, the environmental advisory board, right now there’s an affordable housing task force, sometimes the human relations commission, sometimes the open space board of trustees, sometimes the parks and recreation board, the downtown design board. So you go and you talk to everybody” (App. D-2, p. 1).

In the way Jean defines her role, there are different elements of communicative planning: she works for the community, trying to balance diverse interests, she thinks about the best way to involve citizens upstream of each project. However, even if it should be shaped by the public’s input, she still mentions that planners hold technical knowledge and planning expertise that is valued by decision-makers, which is more characteristic of the rational-comprehensive planning style. Finally, she keeps a realistic point of view on public participation in the sense that she recognizes it involves issues of exclusion because at some point, planners have to be pragmatic and keep on going, which can be associated to an incrementalism-pragmatism approach to planning.

Golden Vision 2030 has been a major and exceptional project for the city of Golden, and there aren’t very many occasions for a city of this size (almost 19,000 inhabitants) to carry on such an extensive public outreach. However, consequently to the partnership with the Orton Family Foundation, Steve seeks to rely much less on traditional methods of public involvement than before and hopes to use more sustainable ways to engage citizens and stakeholders in the future. In fact, he sees public participation in planning as being an essential element of stability in his city for it helps winning public support over plans and policies. Furthermore, he acknowledges that the quality of decisions will be better if the community has been involved in the process, and he sees public engagement as

an opportunity to create a dialogue within the community. Therefore, he sees his role towards the public as creating the right process to enable the community to make good decisions:

“A public planner’s role is to create the opportunity for the community to make its own decisions about its future, in terms of land-use and urban form and even social health of the community. [...] The process is often times the most important thing more than the outcome. [...] By definition [...] whatever decision the community makes is correct, I really mean it! The community doesn’t make bad decisions. And our job is to create the atmosphere and the surrounding and the process where they make well-informed decisions” (App. D-3, p. 8).

Steve is working for the Golden residents community, and his role as he defines it is pretty clear in the sense that he has to help the community deciding who they want to be and getting there. In regard to the elected officials, his role is to provide them with planning expertise and technical knowledge:

“But we also have a role directly with the council to provide them objective analysis of whatever it is we’re bringing, whether it’s a policy question or a land-use case or something. [...] Our job is to give them the information in a well-written, concise objective way, so that they can make their decisions. And then it comes down to us to do the implementation” (App. D-3, p. 8).

Thus, Steve believes a planner should be impartial and should not have a stake in the different projects s/he carries out. His role is to provide the appropriate information for the board to make their decisions and then to implement the decision that has been taken. Therefore the planner is accountable both to the elected officials and the community, the agenda is controlled both by the board and the public, and the planner’s position in this system varies:

“Except when it’s an organized process, the community doesn’t communicate to council through staff. But in a plan like Comprehensive Plan or Golden Vision they do, because we organize the conversation. But they speak directly to the elected officials, and the elected officials are accountable to them. But sometimes we’re a link, and sometimes we’re just a resource to both” (App. D-3, p. 8).

Being formed by elected representatives of the community, the board has a direct link with the constituents. They are accountable to them, the constituents have the opportunity to converse with them and eventually vote them down if they are not satisfied. The planning staff serves as support to all of them for planning matters such as land-use cases. In the situation of a more unique project that requires specific public input, the planning staff “organizes the conversation” and facilitates the dialogue between the community and the board.

In Steve’s discourse, there are elements of different planning approaches: the fact that he believes planners should be impartial and hold technical objective knowledge that serves both the board and the community can be associated to the rational-comprehensive planning style; his positioning in favor of public participation as a means to help the community make good decisions about their

living environment and to create an opportunity for dialogue among citizens denotes a clear communicative approach to planning.

As opposed to the other planning agencies, PPACG did not seek a broad public outreach when designing the Sustainability plan process. Instead they formed focus groups with citizens who were able to meet during the day, and carried out a community survey in order to validate the Sustainability Goals that had been defined collaboratively by the member governments. Outside of this project, which is a big scale process for the agency, public participation is limited to techniques mandated by law. Although Rich favors public participation in planning as a means to gain public buy-in and to avoid coercive regulations and policies, he associates it with problems of self-exclusion (people who choose not to participate for different reasons) and difficulties linked to the fact that people who are already convinced or ‘usual suspects’ will tend to get involved more easily. Rich has a pragmatic view on public involvement in planning in the sense that he believes it is critical for the success of a plan or policy implementation that requires a change in behavior from the citizens and users. His main task in his work is to develop strategies and make sure they are successfully implemented:

“I think it’s to plan for, or determine what the needs are for the future, and develop strategies, get the funding, make sure that we achieve what our goals are for the future. And it goes beyond that in the sense that you want to get groups and some sort of committees together to make sure that the plans are implemented. Because there’s a lot of great plans out there, and sometimes they don’t get implemented until 5 or 10 years down the road” (App. D-4, p. 8).

Rich focuses on the implementation side of a plan, which might be due to the fact that he is the Environmental Planning manager and tight to numeric goals such as the greenhouse gas reduction percentage. In order to achieve the successful implementation of a plan, Rich works collaboratively with technical committees from outside the agency. He sees his role towards those committees as a “facilitation role” (App. D-4, p. 2). In addition, the regional agency status of PPACG implies that he should collaborate with the different stakeholders and organize the conversation in the search for a common solution:

“And since we’re a regional planning agency, our board of directors – that is the body that governs us – tells us what to do. I mean I have a boss, but then my boss reports to the board. It’s made up of elected officials from 3 counties and 8 cities. So you have a lot of different opinions, you have a lot of different interests in concern, you have a lot of projects that they might want to go ahead and push, and there’s not much money. So I think it’s trying to balance all that. And since we’re a regional planning agency, we try to find common ground in recommending solutions and trying to get a dialogue started with everybody. So I think that’s kind of one of the things that I always rustle with, it’s that there’s not always a clean solution to a problem, and often times the solution is kind of something that not everyone is happy with but something that people can live with. I don’t know if that makes sense” (App. B-4, p. 3).

The elected officials that form the board are the decision-makers and set the agenda. The planner's role is to try to balance the different opinions within the board to get to a solution. Rich does not view that solution as a consensus in the sense that not everyone is happy with it at the end of the process. In addition, Rich relies very much on the fact that planners are technical experts who make recommendations to the board based on this rational knowledge:

"And that's just the reality, whether it's at the federal level, state level or local level. That is, those regulations, those policies, those ordinances that ultimately drive things. But it's the technical information behind those that's important. And it's important to explain the positive and the negative ramifications and implications of those decisions that get made" (App. B-4, p. 3).

It is important for Rich to have the opportunity to explain to the board what the technical consequences of a decision would be; once this is done, the board has the power to decide whatever they want and the planning staff should work on the implementation side of the decision. However, the board ideally doesn't make bad decisions, they make decisions that serve the community's interests as they are representative of this community:

"I see the elected officials as being a critical part in a community because they reflect the desires and needs, and I guess a utopian world of what the community wishes are. And hopefully they don't reflect just the needs and desires of those elected officials but the constituents in their community. So I see myself as being a constituent for the elected officials in my area" (App. D-4, pp. 8-9).

On a personal level, Rich is a constituent, he is the public, and he provides input to public meetings like anybody else would. However, on the professional level, he believes that his role is to balance the public input in the process against the technical data:

"It's somewhat difficult because you're trying to balance the public input from the technical recommendations and a lot of the advices that you get. I think often times you get public comments on documents, but it's hard for the public to see if there's been any changes made. In other words, a lot of public processes aren't necessarily that transparent. And I mean, that's somewhat a problem at our organization and any organization, it's to make the public aware of specifically what you're looking for as far as input into the planning process that you're doing. Because you just can't have a public meeting saying 'read this plan, what do you think?'. It's got to be 'what do you think of these projects? How can these projects be improved? Do you like these projects? If you don't like these projects, what projects do you like? Or rank these projects in order of importance for funding'. So you really have to tailor what you want from the public in your message" (App. D-4, p. 8).

In order to be efficient and "transparent", the process should be well designed and clearly explained to the public as well as what will be done with their input. This is also important as Rich ultimately feels accountable to the public for the quality of his work:

“I feel accountable to the public, [...] I mean, how does the public feel about what you do? So in that sense, you’re accountable to yourself in the actions that you’re conveying to the public. I mean, I think we’re in large part judged by what the public’s perception is of what we do, whether it’s by newspaper articles, TV interviews, the plans that we produce. And the board also listens to what the public has to say. So I mean you might get someone that doesn’t like what you do, and then that concern gets reflected to an elected official that sits on our board, and he’ll bring it up at a meeting. So I mean, the public has an input and a role both through the elected officials that represent them, and also directly in our planning process too through public outreach” (App. D-4, p. 9).

All along his discourse, Rich shows a sense of pragmatism and realism. In fact, he sees public participation as a way to gain public buy-in but above all to avoid unpopular coercive policies; his main task is to develop strategies and to make sure they are implemented successfully; the public is judge of the planning staff’s work through its involvement in the process. This can be interpreted as practicing planning in the incrementalism-pragmatism style. However, Rich relies very much on technical data and expertise as the valid source of knowledge, which characterizes a rational-comprehensive approach. Even though he believes public participation in planning is a good thing, he does not seek to open the process to a broader public in order to reach a consensus over a regional vision or plan, but rather to make sure the system is transparent and the participants are not misled.

### 5.3 The planners’ ethical and moral values guiding community engagement practices

As demonstrated in the previous sections, the planners I have interviewed have quite different approaches to planning practice: Jill pushes for public participation, stakeholder involvement and collaboration as much as she can; Jean emphasizes that she works for the community while highlighting that planners hold technical knowledge complementary to public input and that some practical difficulties to broad citizen participation should be taken into consideration; Steve also views planners as technical experts but stresses that the role of a planner is to help a community make well-informed decisions about their living environment and to create an opportunity for dialogue among citizens; Rich values public participation as a means to gain public buy-in and avoid coercive and unpopular policies, and focuses on rationalist technical data to inform the decision-making process and on the successful implementation of a plan.

The purpose of this section is to attempt to reveal the planners’ ethical and moral values that guide them toward the engagement of their communities in the planning process. It could be argued that planners follow the guidelines of their planning agencies in regard to public participation and stakeholder involvement, which they might do to a certain degree; however, as we have noticed in the example of Jill, planners might try to influence the planning practices of an organization or have the choice to leave it if they didn’t ethically agree with them, as Steve highlights:

“It would be sad if they wanted to go in a direction that ethically would be really bad. But if they wanted to go in a direction that professionally I didn’t agree with, my choice is to go work somewhere else” (App. B-3, p. 5).

A set of ethical values that could be perceived in the planners’ discourses will now be unveiled. Those values correspond to my interpretation of what moral principles the interviewed planners have expressed in favor of citizen involvement and stakeholder engagement in planning. On no account should this list be considered exhaustive; rather it should be viewed as a contribution to the debate on public participation and ethics. As defined in the theory chapter, ethics refers to a set of “moral principles that govern a person's behavior or the conducting of an activity” (E-source: Oxford Dictionaries). In regard to planning, Campbell & Marshall (1999) identify three variables related to ethics: the focus on the process (deontology) versus the outcomes (teleology) in planning practice; the focus on universality versus relativity of a planning solution; the focus on planning as serving individual versus collective interests. Other value-revealing questions concerning for example the contribution of planning to society, the planner’s main commitment or accountability (see other example in Table 5) can be asked in order to understand what planners ought to do to engage their communities in the planning process. Seven moral value themes have been identified in the interviews as being important features of communicative planning practices: (1) the public good; (2) fairness and justice; (3) the right process; (4) conversation openness; (5) accountability; (6) transparency of the process; (7) dedication and optimism. With the interviews as a basis for interpretation and the previous sections of the chapter as background explanation, each of these themes will now be exemplified separately.

### 5.3.1 Working for the public good

Working for the public good is fundamental for the interviewed planners who are committed to engage their communities in planning. This means that they are planning for the ‘common interest’, for the community as a whole rather than for individuals:

“What I like about public planning, or urban planning, is that it is focused on the public good. It is not about helping the elite, or the powerful, or some subset of society, it is about thinking about what is good for all of us as a group. I particularly like that” (App. B-1, p. 2).

For public planners, the idea of serving the public good goes together with the idea of letting the community define what its needs and desires are, and therefore with public participation in the planning process: “we have to get the outreach to fit where the people concerns are and to find ways to do that. Everyone’s different” (App. D-2, p. 6). Since planning affects people’s quality of life, it would seem kind of absurd not to ask them what they want. Planners are public servants who work for their constituents to help them define and create the living environment that corresponds to them. Thus, planners should not impose their views or solutions, but follow and implement what the community decides, because “the city belongs to the community” (App. B-3, p. 5). By providing them with all the relevant information about a vision, a project, its consequences, citizens will be able to make well-informed and good decisions about their community: “by definition, whatever decisions

the community makes are the right decisions for them, because it's their community" (App. D-3, p. 7). The role of the planner is to create the right conditions for the public to participate and make good decisions. Letting a community drive decisions represents a sustainable way to practice planning, as a community doesn't make bad decisions on the long-term:

"I believe that community is [...] a pretty resilient thing, that you can't screw it up too badly, that it's a strong organism and that it can withstand some short-term bad choices, even though I said that by definition they're all good choices, some of them are less good than others. And so that helps you understand that no individual decision is that crucial towards the future, and you just do your best, and that the folks in the community are very committed to them" (App. D-3, p. 9).

Somehow, the planner's responsibility is 'limited' to offering citizens a meaningful opportunity to effectively participate (which might not be easy anyway). It is therefore important to emphasize the responsibility of the public in the process and let them shoulder this responsibility:

"It's not just about us [as planners] presenting what we're doing and people reacting to it, it's about bringing the community to the table, and say 'what is your responsibility in making this happen?'. So it's not just about the city organization doing what we have to do, it's about 'how do we as a community step up and make whatever it is happen that we want to happen?'. And it's bringing people's own responsibility into that equation. And I really love that idea, because it isn't just about top-down, 'what's the government going to do?'. It's about 'what can we achieve as a community?'" (App. B-2, pp. 7-8).

### 5.3.2 Advancing fairness and justice

Working for the public good also means that extra prodding should be used to involve groups of people who are often not taken into consideration in the society, in order to be able to balance the more powerful or louder groups' input:

"There's this ethos of reaching out and helping people who are less well off than yourself and advocating for people who are unable to advocate for themselves. And especially I think that's why I'm attracted to just government, because to me that's entirely the purpose of government: it's to look out for the public welfare, to look out for people who otherwise wouldn't be able to look out for themselves and try and improve quality of life for everybody regardless of whether you're wealthy, or live on the right side of the tracks, or whatever. I think that should be the starting point, that's why we exist, that's why government exists. So that should be priority number 1, it's how we make life better for people, it's not about power" (App. D-1, p. 7).

Public planning should enable citizens to have access to the same number and quality of services, regardless of their income, origins or place of living; public planners should focus on improving everybody's quality of life. The idea is not to favor one group over another, but to enable the least advantaged to have a say in the process:



“I don’t know if I go as far as to say that I should be advocating for one group more than another, but I should at least make sure there’s a leveled playfield, that nobody’s voice is louder than another. So to me it means I have to give more help to those who have a quiet voice” (App. D-1, p. 7).

The ‘have-not’ should be given a voice in the process, be heard and feel heard, get the same level and quality of information as the other groups, and not be dominated either by the other participating groups or by the planning organizations themselves; planners should therefore pay extra attention to those groups.

### 5.3.3 Focusing on the right process

In order for the least advantaged groups to provide a meaningful input and the communities to make good decisions, all the stakeholders should be given a fair opportunity to participate. The emphasis should be put on the process (deontology) rather than on the outcomes of the process (teleology), because if the process is well designed then the conversation can start on an honest and respectful basis and the stakeholders might find the path towards a consensual solution:

“And let’s focus in getting the process right so we can build up trust between all of these different stakeholders [...] and have an open and safe dialogue” (App. B-1, p. 9).

In cases of very controversial and heated issues, the solution can be to bring an external and neutral facilitator to organize the conversation, as he might be able to emphatically understand all the different perspectives and bring the stakeholders to sit at the same table, feeling comfortable and eager to find a solution. Depending of the context, each public participation and stakeholder involvement process should be custom made to match the needs and goals set upstream of the project. The engagement strategies might for example involve different techniques at different stages of the process to increase the chances of broad public outreach. In any case, a planner should be focused on getting the process right, on opening the dialogue to the whole community, rather than on the implementation side of the work, which might also be more satisfying on a personal point of view:

“But I think to be satisfied in the long run and in a planning career, you have to enjoy the process and the opportunity to help the community make decisions and not base your self-worth on what got implemented, because some really great ideas don’t get implemented or they take a lot of time to be. And you’re gone, and somebody will be implementing your plan, but your satisfaction is that you did a good job on it, and the community” (App. D-3, pp. 6-7).

### 5.3.4 Engaging in an open conversation

Engaging the community in the decision-making process also means that the planner should be open to collaborating not only with the public but also with stakeholders, colleagues and staff. The idea is to have a coherent behavior all along the way:

“I like working with my colleagues, I like working with very competent people to find solutions and get things done and be collaborative about them, I like the atmosphere in which I work. I like when we have really good interactions with the public, I like when we hear what they want to say, what they want and we try to put it in action. I like working with the decision-makers” (App. B-2, p. 3).

Thus, pushing for collaboration is an attitude that can be applied to many different levels:

- Between the planning staff, the public and the stakeholders: “actually the days that I usually come home happiest is when I’ve been out working with stakeholders, the days that I have the sustainability cafes, or when I go out and do Metro Quest workshops. It’s just so great to talk to people, and hear from them what they’re passionate about, and hear them get excited and animated and talking about ‘this is why we should invest in transit’ or having ‘ah ah’ moments. [...] But if I can engage them effectively, a lot of people tend to have ‘ah ah’ moments, like ‘oh, I never realized that sprawling communities means more taxes for me, and I might actually save money if my community was compact’. I really enjoy that” (App. D-1, pp. 10-11);
- Among the citizens: “so the ways that we try to make the system better are kind of, in spite of the formal process that right now has to occur at the end because of law, to create more informal conversations earlier on. In most places, we’ve only gotten as far as informal neighbor meetings, where the neighbors and the applicant talk to each other” (App. B-3, p. 4). “But the attitudinal [change] is really finding ways to help the community talk to itself” (App. D-3, p. 6);
- With elected officials, colleagues and staff: “we empower as low as in the organization as we can, to make decisions and take actions” (App. D-3, p. 2); “the dilemma is I’m trying not to impose my beliefs on my staff, because I want them to come up with ideas. So we as a group brainstorm over ideas for these upcoming plans, and also which order to do them in” (App. B-3, p. 8).

Working with a collaborative attitude means that one should be open-minded to new ideas, new thinking, new ways of doing. It also means that one should be self-confident enough to recognize one’s mistakes but not too confident either, having an honest and transparent behavior:

“If you have enough self confidence to be willing to recognize your mistakes, [you can] grow from them, as opposed to have them just drag you down. If you’re already that confident, then you won’t be able to deal with your mistakes. So you have to have a high opinion of yourself. But it has to be warranted. [...] You actually still need to be as good as you think you are, or almost as good as you think you are. If you have too high of an opinion of yourself, it’s not going to work too” (App. D-3, p. 7).

### 5.3.5 Being accountable to the public

In a planning agency, the elected officials are the decision-makers and ‘bosses’; planners therefore have a responsibility towards them and report to them, even if it is indirectly. However, because they work for their constituents, planners are ultimately accountable to the community, which they actually belong to sometimes. They plan for the public good, the public is judge of the quality of their work. But they’re also accountable to themselves to do good work:

“As public servants, we’re accountable to ourselves, our own values and our own sense of ethics and work ethics, we’re accountable to our co-workers and our bosses, and the city council and the community. It’s an interesting job in that way, it’s that we have a responsibility to taxpayers to do good work. Whereas you know, if you just work on business, you got a responsibility to work for your company or for your business. But ours is wider than that” (App. D-2, p. 8).

### 5.3.6 Caring about the transparency of the process

The public participation or stakeholder involvement process should clearly be explained to the participants, along with the outcomes that are expected from it. This will enable to start on a clear basis where everybody understands the rules of the game and accepts them before playing. It provides a foundation for an open, safe and honest dialogue between all the participants:

“Whenever you engage people, you always make a promise to them, and then you do your best to keep that promise. I think it’s a really good lens for thinking through ‘what can I promise?’. Not overpromising, because if you give people the impression that ‘you’re going to get to design the plan, and what you say is what’s going to be adopted’, and then the complete opposite happens then they become jaded and feel betrayed and won’t participate again. And so I try to be very honest with the sustainability cafes and lay out exactly what I thought I could do with their input, but not overpromise. In that sense I don’t think many people felt like they were betrayed. I think they all had a good understanding of ‘ok, this is our chance, maybe we’re disappointed with the outcomes’ but at least it didn’t feel like they’ve been misled in terms of what was going to be done with their input” (App. D-1, pp. 8-9).

In addition, it seems important that planners are independent from elected officials. The planner’s role is to help a community define what it wants for its future, but not to lobby for a certain vision of the community by the board, even if s/he can suggest ways to reach the goals that would be more efficient, sustainable or respectful of the citizens:

“But even though the planning department often has more direct contact with elected officials, I also think it should be well-defined and there should be as much separation as appropriate; we’re not telling them what decisions to make or participating in their debate. [...] I very much enjoy working in a community where politics is between the elected officials and the community, and the chain of communication officially is

through the city manager. He's the chief executive officer, his job is to implement council's policy, and my job is to help him implement council's policy or do my portion of it. So I personally like to keep a very formal relationship with council" (App. D-3, p. 8).

### 5.3.7 Being dedicated and optimistic

The last point relates to the planners being enthusiastic and optimistic about their job. They have to be dedicated to making a positive difference in the community. They might be motivated to do so for different reasons, for example:

- It could simply be the will to create better places: "But I like the concept, I mean I like that we work with so many different concepts, so many different ideas, and that we really are about trying to make better places" (App. B-2, p. 3);
- It could be to make their cities or regions become one of the places in the world where the quality of life is the highest: "I do really like urban planning. I love cities. I just really want to do what I can to help make Denver one of the greatest cities in the world. [...] And I just began to realize that those kinds of cities really just don't happen by accident, there is actually some thought put in to what kind of city Toronto wanted to be. And I just started getting really excited about that" (App. B-1, p. 2);
- It could be to sustain the vitality of small communities and neighborhoods life: "So there has been and there continues to be a lot of passion for the downtown area, and making it both economically viable, but also making it remain the social and emotional core of the community. Then the other big passion is neighborhoods. One of the problems that humans have is they're pretty much all afraid of change. And neighborhoods change, and the trick is to try to help a community define how it wants to change, and to deal with both gradual and sudden change in a way that enhances or at least is neutral towards the goals" (App. B-3, p. 2);
- It could be to change behaviors in regard to the environment, for example by pushing the community to recycle or to conserve water (App. B-4, p. 2).

The idea is to find something to be passionate about and to be optimistic about the fact that our work can actually make a difference, even if it is on a small scale. And then it is about finding ways to make it happen and be persistent about it on the long-term.

## 6 Conclusion

“Demographic changes are happening; the baby boomers are growing old, and they can’t drive everywhere anymore. And then their children, the echo boomers, are rediscovering this interest in urban area. [...] They’ve got this renewed interest in urban areas, they’ve got environmental issues and national security issues, like dependence on foreign oil, which are pointing to changing the way we think about transportation to be not just about building highways anymore but about how we get to the store (‘maybe I can walk there!’). And that’s a fundamental cultural shift that’s happening, not just within planning, but it’s just happening around us. So either planning is going to evolve with it or we are going to be catching up with what the public is in that sense” (App. D-1, p. 6).

In the context of rapidly evolving societies, public participation in public affairs and more particularly in urban planning has become a guiding principle for renewed governance faced with the crisis of traditional representative democracy. Planners who are in charge of implementing community engagement strategies in practice are on the front line for finding efficient and satisfactory ways to do so. They have to make critical choices in regard to citizens and stakeholders who participate in the process and the space given to them in the debate. Their professional activity demands that they make ethical judgments and reflect on their practice of planning. This project focused on the relationship between community engagement practices, planners’ professional identity and role and the ethical and moral values they express. It aimed at providing answers to the following research question:

**What are the ethical and moral values  
on which planners rely to frame their role  
and engage their communities in public planning?**

The main source of evidence that was used to take up the challenges raised by this research question is constituted by qualitative interviews of four planners in Colorado, USA. The analysis of these interviews was supported by a theoretical framework elaborated from a review of relevant academic literature. A hermeneutical approach was used to interpret the planners’ stories, that is to say that it was attempted to understand them from the perspective of the actors rather than from an external observer’s angle. The findings were presented in the following manner: a factual analysis of the interviews was first performed in order to uncover what public participation entails in practice; this enabled to identify what features the interviewed planners valued in the practice of planning and which planning style(s) they could be associated to; this led to revealing a set of moral values guiding planners into community engagement practices.

Planners generally see public participation as a positive feature of planning practice for different reasons. First because it enables the planning agencies to communicate important information about a policy or a plan with the citizens, and the public to share their views and opinions about it; second

because it helps them do a better job by developing policies and plans that reflect the community's needs and desires; third because this leads to make better decisions and products.

However, they distinguish themselves by emphasizing various and more profound motives for engaging the public and stakeholders in the decision-making process. Depending on those, they design and employ different strategies for citizen participation and stakeholder involvement to match the goals set upstream of the project. For example, a planner might believe people who are affected by a policy or a plan have a right to have a meaningful say in the decision-making process, and s/he might also want to reach out to underserved groups to balance the other groups' input and work toward the 'common interest'; s/he might therefore try to design a public participation strategy targeting as broad range of citizens as possible, including the least advantaged, and aiming at innovative deliberation between the participants. Another reason for involving the public or stakeholders might be to gain participants' buy-in over the vision or plan, for them to feel ownership about it; the planner might therefore seek to at least consult them about it. The aim might be to create an opportunity for dialogue within the community; in this case the planner might choose to favor more informal conversations outside of a particular project. Citizens can also be considered as customers, in which case the planner will prefer to organize satisfaction surveys or reviews in the community. Thus, depending of the rationale behind public and stakeholder engagement and of the context, the planner will design and employ custom-made strategies that might involve various participation techniques and stages.

Even if other variables might come into play, the participation strategies and their attributed purposes are revealing elements of the way planners approach planning. In fact, a planner whose priority is to work collaboratively with stakeholders and the public, to open the decision-making process to as large group of people as possible, to balance diverse interests in the search for public good or to help a community make good decisions about its future might be associated with a communicative approach to planning. A planner who values technical knowledge over the rest, believes s/he holds planning expertise that should balance the community's input, or focuses on the implementation side of the plan or policy might fit better in the rational-comprehensive planning style. Finally, a planner who prefers to keep a realistic point of view on public participation in the sense that s/he recognizes it is automatically related to issues of exclusion, which doesn't mean s/he should stop the process, or sees citizen involvement as a means to avoid the implementation of coercive policies can be considered to show some incrementalism-pragmatism style characteristics. However, the interpretation of the different planners' interviews carried out for this project shows that planners might match different planning styles. For example, s/he might strongly advocate for public participation but still believe the planner also has to provide objective technical analysis to the decision-makers and the community; s/he might acknowledge the advantages of extensive public outreach for the decision-making process but might adopt a more pragmatic attitude of targeting only specific groups.

Planners can therefore view their role as a combination of many features. Among these different attitudes, a set of seven ethical and moral values that guide planners toward the engagement of their communities could be identified in the interviewed planners' stories:

1. Working for the public good: planners are public servants who work for their communities. They defend 'the common interest' rather than the interest of specific persons, stakeholders or groups. In order to do so, they focus on involving their communities in the decision-making process to let them define what their needs and desires are. Their role is to create the right conditions for citizens to make their own decisions about their living environment. They emphasize the responsibility of the public in the process rather than rely on the planning agency to implement a vision.
2. Advancing fairness and justice in their communities: public planners aim at helping people who are less well off. They seek to give a meaningful voice to the least advantaged to balance the other groups' input, in order to reduce inequalities between citizens. They concentrate on improving everybody's quality of life by a fairer distribution of services in the city. They do not favor one group over another, but rather make sure there's a leveled playfield for all groups to participate in the decision-making process.
3. Focusing on the right decision-making process: they want to make sure there is a fair opportunity for all stakeholders to participate. Getting the right process in place is more important than the outcomes of the process because it provides an honest, respectful and trustful basis for discussion. They custom-make the involvement strategies to match the needs and goals of the project. They open the dialogue to the whole community and trust that if the process is right, the community will make good decisions.
4. Engaging in an open conversation: they adopt a collaborative attitude in all areas of their work, whether it is toward the public and stakeholders or toward elected officials, colleagues and staff. They try to find ways to foster the dialogue among citizens, thinking it might help people to live together and support each other. On a personal level, they try to remain open-minded to new ideas, new people and new ways of doing. They value honesty, transparency and self-confidence that enables to recognize and grow from their own mistakes.
5. Being accountable to the public: they plan for their community, the public is judge of their actions. They also have a responsibility toward the elected officials who are the decision-makers. And they are accountable to themselves, their values and ethics to do good work.
6. Caring about the transparency of the decision-making process: they explain the rules of the game to all participants before starting, and make sure they are understood and accepted, which enables the dialogue to start on an open and safe basis. This means that they should be honest about the outcomes of the process and what will be done with the participants' input, so that feelings of betrayal can be avoided. In addition, they adopt an independent attitude toward the elected officials, not trying to influence them with their vision of planning.



7. Being dedicated and optimistic: they are enthusiastic and optimistic about the fact that their position enables them to make a positive difference in their community, even if it is on a small scale, and are dedicated to making it happen, whether their passion is to create better places, to make a city become one of the greatest in the world, to sustain the vitality of small communities and neighborhoods' life or to change environmental behaviors.

This suggested list of ethical and moral values is drawn from the interpretation of the interviewed planners' stories. In no case should it be considered as being exhaustive, but rather should it be viewed as a contribution to the debate about public participation in planning and ethics.

## 7 Reflections

This chapter aims at reflecting upon the project as a whole, and at discussing what could have been done better or differently and eventual limitations in the approach chosen to carry out the research. It is therefore mainly dedicated to methodological considerations, but opens up on possible future research opportunities that this project could inspire, and ends on personal thoughts about the learning process followed during this two-year master's program.

The first characteristic of the project that could be considered as a limitation is the fact that it relies on the interviews of only four planners, resulting in a limited quantity of qualitative data to analyze. In fact, a bigger and more diverse selection of planners would have allowed deeper and richer findings and interpretation. However, each planner could be interviewed twice, which enabled me to get to know and understand them better and to collect more personal and profound perceptions and reflections upon their professional activity. Furthermore, the study didn't aim at drawing generalizable conclusions on planning practices, which necessitates a more quantitative and statistical approach to the problem, but rather at taking advantages of particular experiences. In fact, I believe that if we know how to listen well, everybody has an interesting and valuable story to tell that we could learn from.

I would have liked to engage the interviewed planners in a confronting situation with their own discourse, which I tried to do to a limited extent during the second round of interviews. But this could have represented an opportunity either to get them to read and comment on my interpretations of the interviews, or more interestingly to get them to meet each other, for example in a focus group, and exchange their ideas and opinions about the space given to public participation and stakeholder engagement in planning and the different strategies they had been involved in. The first solution of asking them feedback upon my analysis could have enabled me to make sure I hadn't misinterpreted their thoughts, which is always a risk I am aware of, and given me the opportunity to reinterpret them with more accuracy. On the other hand, it might have led them to unconsciously adjust their discourse to something more politically correct or acceptable. The other solution of bringing them together to share their views might have revealed higher similarities or differences between them than what I could sense by questioning them individually. However, some of them had specifically asked me to limit their participation to two interviews, and I felt it was already a big commitment for persons I had never met before. Hopefully nothing will get them hit the roof if they read this report.

Even though I enjoyed the degree of freedom and autonomy it provided compared to the two group work projects I had done during the previous semesters, carrying out this research alone was also a challenge. In fact, it doesn't offer the possibility to confront interpretations with anyone, and it makes the whole process much more uncertain and hesitant. The problem formulation stage is especially challenging, as I now realize that having to formulate out loud one's thoughts is extremely helpful to move forward on the issue.

Regarding the use of academic literature, I am conscious that the theoretical framework developed in chapter 3 does not provide a critical analysis of public participation and stakeholder involvement

in planning. This choice was based on the idea that the theory chapter's framework was inspired by the interviews, as explained through the methodological chapter and more particularly by the circular inductive and deductive processes of knowledge acquisition; since the interviewed planners generally viewed public participation in planning as a good thing, no argument against or difficulties or issues linked to the engagement of communities were presented, although the debate is heated in the academic literature. However, this could leave the reader with the impression that an idealistic and utopian vision of public participation was described. Furthermore, bringing the counter-argument in a conversation usually enriches it, and it could have been beneficial the second time I met the planners and during the analysis and interpretation phase. But I followed by initial idea that was to let the planners guide the conversation and reveal the stories they wanted to tell.

As mentioned earlier, this project and its findings could be viewed as a humble contribution to the debates about public participation and ethics in planning, and the role of the planner. Further research opportunities could include replicating the same research question to more planners or different contexts of planning. The problem could also be raised to professional planners' associations, such as the American Planning Association, who develop normative guidelines or codes of conduct to the attention of practitioners, or to policy makers, who write the legal requirements about public participation in the law or constitutions, in order to uncover their rationales for it. This links to the role and ethics of elected officials in regard to public participation and planning; for example, are they willing to give up some of their power to enable a better representation of their constituents in public affairs and foster participatory governance?

Overall, even if I acknowledge now that there are many things that could have been done differently or better in this project, I am really pleased about what I have learnt from it. First it enabled me to learn about the American planning system and more particularly about planning in Colorado, which is where I am now settled. Second, I really enjoyed meeting with the planners I interviewed, as they all had different and interesting stories to tell, in different contexts. Third, I am now convinced that public participation and stakeholder involvement in planning is not just a utopia but can work in practice and make a big difference toward a democratization of public affairs. For me who have a strong rational scientific background, it is very inspiring to realize that it is possible to create opportunities for dialogue within a community and to get back to the essential values of being able to live together and help one another, which I believe is the way toward social sustainability in the cities. I hope I will be able to practice planning with practical wisdom, being open-minded and fostering collaboration at all levels.

“The task of the planning enterprise is to critically interrogate the governance practices that currently exist and to help governance communities concerned with place qualities to develop different approaches where these are seen to be failing” (Healey, 2003, p. 116)

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US Census 2010	<a href="http://2010.census.gov/2010census/">http://2010.census.gov/2010census/</a>



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## Appendices

The following appendices can be found on a CD attached to this report:

Appendix A: First contact interview guide

Appendices B: First contact interview transcriptions

Appendix B-1: Jill Locantore, DRCOG

Appendix B-2: Jean Gatza, The City of Boulder

Appendix B-3: Steve Glueck, The City of Golden

Appendix B-4: Rich Muzzy, PPACG

Appendices C: Second contact interview guides

Appendix C-1: Jill Locantore, DRCOG

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