AUCKLAND 2050: ANALYZING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN STATE-LED STRATEGIC & INDIGENOUS PLANNING

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We are grateful to have conducted this research on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the Coast Salish people, including the lands of the Squamish (Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw), Tsleil-Waututh (səlQilw̓ətaʔɬ) and Musqueam (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm) Nations.

Introduction

Auckland is a major city located on the North Island of New Zealand. With a population of over 1.6 million people, it is the country's most populous city and is experiencing rapid growth (Auckland Council 2018). New Zealand is home to settlers and the native Māori peoples. The Māori are the Indigenous Polynesian people of mainland New Zealand who arrived on canoes from Hawaiki, which is told to be the place where lo, the supreme being, created the world and its first people. The Māori are a diverse mix of various Polynesian cultures who settled in New Zealand over one thousand years ago (Walrond 2005). Despite colonial presence, the Māori have been able to maintain their identity and culture, setting an example for other Indigenous populations who live in countries dominated by European colonials. The Māori people's contribution to New Zealand's economy is extremely multi-faceted and includes the primary sector, small and medium enterprises, natural resources, and tourism (Sutton 1994). After securing cultural revival in the late 1960's, the New Zealand government began to acknowledge the steadily growing political power of the Māori, with their efforts in protesting property rights and the illegal confiscation of land (Sutton 1994). As the Māori continue to preserve their culture and identity, it is important that Indigenous cultures and values are reflected in major environmental planning developments and interventions proposed by the government. Although plans should always reflect the needs of the population, it is imperative that Indigenous voices are prioritized and consulted prior to engaging with the rest of the population. Māori participation should be a key component of the planning initiatives in New Zealand, and Auckland 2050 serves as an example of a plan that prioritized Indigenous feedback.

As the population of New Zealand increases, the desperate need for housing will put immense strain on New Zealand's wildlife. The need for housing will inevitably start encroaching on bushlands and forests pushing endangered species that rely on these ecosystems closer towards complete extinction (Ramstad 2007). When it comes to planning for the environment, it is crucial that Māori traditional ecological knowledge is integrated into these spatial plans, which helps contribute to the preservation of Māori culture.

Planning and land use policy in Auckland cannot be understood without considering the Treaty of Waitangi, the "founding document" of New Zealand. Signed in 1840, it was an agreement between the British government and the majority of Māori leadership at the time. It established a formal relationship between the colonial authorities and the Māori, whereby the Crown gained the right to govern and in turn, Māori became British subjects while retaining ownership over their lands and resources (Ministry of Culture and Heritage 2017). Key differences in wording from English to Māori translation, however, led to divergent understandings of the terms of the treaty. Māori leadership thought they were ceding governance to the Crown, but retaining full authority over their own territories and affairs. Colonial

authorities, on the other hand, believed that Māori had transferred sovereignty to the Crown in exchange for the rights and privileges of being British subjects (Ministry of Culture and Heritage 2017). After facing continued resistance from the Māori, the independent Waitangi Tribunal was created in 1975 to investigate breaches of the treaty and respond to Maori land claims (Ministry of Justice 2020). Since then, it has been common to uphold the spirit and principles of the treaty – which ensures Māori land claims and participation in governance – instead of focusing on the specific wording.

The Auckland Plan 2050 was created by the Auckland Council as a spatial plan, which is the Canadian equivalent to an Official Community Plan (OCP) (Auckland Council 2018). Auckland Plan 2050 was created in order to review and update the previous plan from 2012, which had inherent shortcomings such as outdated data, unprioritized key goals, and too many immeasurable targets. Upon review, further challenges identified for Auckland which had not been accounted for in the 2012 plan included population growth, environmental degradation, and sharing prosperity with all Aucklanders. Projections indicate that the population of Auckland could reach over 2.4 million by 2050, with migration as a key contributor. Urbanization to accommodate growth and climate change are exerting pressure on the vulnerable environment, particularly as a coastal community. Therefore, Auckland Plan 2050 aims to promote social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing through a long-term strategy for Auckland's growth and development. Throughout preparation and development of the plan, the Auckland Council was required to include stakeholder engagement of the central government, infrastructure providers, the private sector, the rural sector, the communities of Auckland, and other relevant parties. The Planning Committee began to draft the plan in November 2016 and it was approved for formal public consultation a year later, with three main stakeholder engagement phases established:

1. Early Engagement Phase (May- June 2017) : Early engagement with the communities of Auckland to refresh the Auckland Plan. This was an opportunity for early input regarding the direction of the plan before formal consultation took place.
2. Early Engagement Phase 2 (targeted engagement) (July- October 2017): Engagement with other key partners and stakeholders throughout the preparation and development of the draft Auckland Plan 2050. This phase sought feedback on the draft strategic framework and the high-level areas of the Development Strategy and included engagement with mana whenua and mataawaka. Six hui (social gatherings/assemblies) were aimed to address Maori wellbeing and values.
3. Public Consultation (February -March 2018) : The Special Consultative Procedure is used to draft Auckland Plan 2050, concurrent with the draft Long-term Plan (10 year

Budget). Opportunities for consultation were made through various methods, including online and in libraries, service centres and local board offices. Feedback was provided in writing (via online feedback forms), through social media and in person (with over 50 "Have Your Say" events).

Through public consultation on the draft plan, the Auckland Council received a very high volume of submissions including 18,742 written submissions, 5,865 in person comments, and 16 social media comments. Māori accounted for 10% of submissions, which was a significant increase from previous similar submission processes. All feedback was processed, coded and analysed. Four workshops were held where the Planning Committee, local boards and advisory panel chairs met to discuss responses to consultation feedback and propose changes. The responses received were summarized into six key themes by Auckland Council: Belonging and Participation, Māori Identity and Wellbeing, Homes and Places, Transport and Access, Environment and Cultural Heritage, and Opportunity and Prosperity. Each outcome had directions, focus areas, and measures to track progress. The development on the plan spanned the duration of two and a half years, with the process from the initial early review phases in November 2016 to the adoption of the Auckland Plan 2050 on June 5th, 2018 (Auckland Council 2018). The digital plan has a time horizon of 30 years, however, it can be updated over time. A monitoring report is released annually to track progress within outcomes established in the plan.

The Auckland Plan 2050 is an instance of a state-led strategic plan with an element of Indigenous Planning. We have chosen the Auckland 2050 Plan because of the comprehensive public engagement strategy, which primarily included written materials, open houses and social media. The following analysis will critically examine the Auckland Plan 2050 through a public participation lens, including insights learned from participatory frameworks by Cornwall (2008), Fung (2006), and Arnstein (1969). These frameworks are discussed in greater detail in the following section. Strengths of the Auckland Plan included Indigenous involvement, public engagement and trackable goals. However, we see opportunities for improvement through the nuances of these processes in achieving what is a genuine democratic process for modern community planning.

The Frameworks

As discussed above, three frameworks are used in this research for analyzing public participation in the development of the Auckland Plan 2050. Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (1969) is perhaps one of the most cited frameworks for analyzing civic engagement. Consisting of eight rungs, the ladder serves as a guide for highlighting who has power when addressing challenges and making decisions. We also analyze the creation of the

Auckland Plan 2050 through Archon Fung's Democracy Cube (2006). The cube is useful for identifying who participates, how they communicate and make decisions, and how they influence the creation of public policies and actions. Finally, Cornwall (2008) believes in utilizing community input combined with tacit knowledge to identify who is participating and who will ultimately benefit in various public participation strategies.

Indigenous Involvement

As mentioned previously, the Auckland 2050 Plan incorporated a comprehensive public engagement strategy that relied heavily on citizen participation and input from the Māori people. The Auckland 2050 Plan outlines several key areas in New Zealand where significant interventions are needed to generate progress. One of these focal areas include preserving Māori identity and wellbeing, "A thriving Māori identity is Auckland's point of difference in the world – it advances prosperity for Māori and benefits all Aucklanders" (Auckland Council 2018). While engaging the community through a two-phase engagement strategy and public consultation phase, Māori involvement was not actually considered in this plan until the second phase of the Early Engagement strategy (targeted engagement), which consisted of six huis aimed at addressing Māori wellbeing, culture, identity, and values. During this phase, one of the biggest challenges for policymakers and designers was trying to embrace the changes and trends that provided solutions which would benefit all users of the city. Designers worked closely with the Māori to provide a framework for a principled approach that would reflect both Indigenous culture and identity within the built environment. The Māori provided input for how Auckland can better manage new construction and new requirements for infrastructure, which will be essential for ensuring the structure of the built environment is resilient to the impacts of climate change and other external factors. Although the Māori were heavily consulted in the second phase of the engagement process, it is interesting to note that there was very little Indigenous engagement during the first phase, which acted as an early opportunity to establish a clear and concise direction before the formal public consultation took place. Because phase one was undertaken to establish a direction for the Auckland 2050 Plan, this was essentially a missed opportunity to involve Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) on how Auckland should progress in the near future.

There are numerous ways to reflect Māori values within the built environment, particularly through the public realm (Walrond 2005). Through various holistic approaches, several meaningful design outcomes can be achieved through the appropriate interventions. "Māori design places focus on reflecting a deeper sense of place through embracing knowledge, concepts and understanding as its foundation and source of inspiration" (Auckland Council 2018). Reflecting the values of the Māori in the Auckland 2050 spatial plan is essential for

securing cultural viability, which also helps the Māori become a more autonomous population who have the ability to provide governance over their own affairs.

Optimizing the values of the Māori in the spatial plan directly reflects the theoretical framework proposed by Andrea Cornwall (2008), which looks specifically at who is participating and who will benefit. Cornwall discusses the importance of reflecting both community input and tacit knowledge in plans, as it helps to inform key directions and focus areas. When the plan was in its early consultation phases with the Māori, the policymakers made sure that three important questions were considered when determining the future of Auckland:

1. "Are we focusing on the right things to be successful?"
2. "Do the areas of focus within the working themes provide the right direction?"
3. "Are the themes a good way to respond to the challenges and opportunities Auckland faces?"

These questions help inform a majority of the key directions and focus areas of the spatial plan. By ensuring that all these elements are prioritized during the plan's formulation, it helps to foster a more inclusive environment where all voices are considered. It is important that the plan not only considers who is benefiting, but who is ultimately participating in the participatory process. Including Indigeous TEK is crucial for Auckland's development and needs to be considered throughout every aspect of Auckland 2050s planning and implementation strategy.

Early Engagement Phases I & II

After creating a working model of five inter-linked themes and a development strategy, Auckland Council heard from eighty-six stakeholders to determine if the identified challenges and proposed directions were focusing on the appropriate areas in Phase I (Auckland Council 2018). Understanding the directions of Fung's Democracy Cube, this phase of engagement was more exclusive, used to develop some preferences, and to allow minimal communicative influence (Fung 2006), while it is considered as consultation on Arnstein's ladder of participation (Arnstein 1969). This is due to the working model and development having already been decided by Auckland Council ahead of engaging these stakeholders, and, based on the evidence report, no meaningful changes were incorporated into their framework.

Auckland Council completed a second round of engagement similar to the first, but with one hundred targeted stakeholders from July-October 2017 and considered more changes to be incorporated in the plan (Auckland Council 2018). Based on Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation, this suggests that some additional decision-making was redistributed but still does not satisfy the criteria of any degrees of citizen power and renders this phase as another form of consultation. Similarly, this second phase of engagement would result in minimal, if any,

movement on the degrees of inclusivity, intensity, or authority within Fung's (2006) democracy cube.

Public Consultation: Phase III

Written Responses

After compiling feedback from the previous two phases of engagement, Auckland Council presented a draft plan of Auckland 2050 through public consultation from February-March 2018. Their first strategy of allowing for and receiving written responses was quite unique from other municipalities, especially compared to cities in Canada where this research is taking place. Most engagement in Canada for Official Community Plans (OCPs) is now conducted via online surveys or through open house events and, as Arnstein (1969) would argue, is tokenistic as it is merely a form of consultation showing that engagement takes place in developing a plan.

Auckland Council prepared forms for the public online, for a People's Panel (in an online format), and a hard copy form. At first, this approach of accepting feedback from written submissions where stakeholders can provide their comments and recommendations may suggest higher citizen power and accessibility to wider demographics. However, after examining their approach for written responses more closely, Auckland Council prepared forms for the public online, a People's Panel (in an online format), and a hard copy form that comprised over 70% of all submissions. In turn, concerns of power imbalances between who is providing the feedback and who is interpreting them are raised. Using both of Arnstein (1969) and Fung's (2006) frameworks for analyzing participation, this approach to participation is far from allowing any degree of citizen power or authority.

Social Media

In presenting the draft plan, Auckland Council also received a few written responses through their social media channels. In their examination of the influence of social media on the participatory culture of young citizens, Loader et al. (2014) highlight that cities are recognizing the value of using these tools to engage a normally underrepresented youth population. However, as outlined by Howard et al. (2016), there are inherent challenges to government agencies using social media for engagement including citizen perception of efforts of the organization and the continual shifting of norms on platforms. Indeed, Auckland Council's efforts may have been misperceived as they only received sixteen comments on their social media channels in response to the draft of the Auckland 2050 Plan. The evidence report for public participation provided little detail as to how these comments were incorporated into the overall plan development, again suggesting that this would fall under consultation in Arnstein's (1969) ladder, and far from the centre on Fung's (2006) democracy cube.

In-Person Responses

In the formation of the Auckland Plan 2050, the Planning Committee utilized verbal comments as a primary source of citizen feedback during the third phase of engagement. The Committee held more than 50 "Have Your Say" events which served as open houses in which the public could view and consequently provide feedback and comments on the Plan. Over the course of these events, through February and March 2018, 5,865 in-person comments were received.

While it is widely acknowledged that open house events such as these are designed to be all-inclusive – offering the platform for all who wish to participate to do so – it is integral to note that these spaces are frequently misrepresentative of the actual public (Fung 2006). Those who have the resources to participate, namely wealth and time, ergo those who can 'afford' to, are the voices that end up being expressed. As will be discussed later, this fact is demonstrated in how a large majority of Plan 2050's feedback came from those with a European background in an older age category. Following Cornwall's framework, the Have Your Say forums were a clear use of invited spaces (Cornwall 2008). Formal powers, in this case the Auckland Planning Committee, facilitated public participation via the creation of a tangible space which allowed individuals to engage with proposed materials. Whilst against Arnstein's ladder this approach falls no higher than consultation, the depth of participation is actually greater than said label implies. Comments from citizens were coded and analyzed and subsequently responded to by the Committee under each of the six outcome categories, entailing that the public did have some communicative influence (Fung 2006).

Improvements, Implications, and Future Considerations

While the Auckland Plan 2050 emphasized an inclusive public engagement strategy, the submissions it received were not entirely representative of the region's diverse population. As displayed in Table 1, Aucklanders with European ethnic origins were highly overrepresented, accounting for 71.2% of all submitters with only 53.5% of the population. Aucklanders from other ethnic backgrounds, however, were largely underrepresented. Māori, for instance, represented 9.7% of submitters but make up 11.5% of the population. Only 6.6% of submitters were Pacific peoples, yet they account for 15.5% of all residents. Auckland's growing Asian community was also notably underrepresented, making up 18.7% of submitters with 28.2% of the population.

Table 1. Ethnicity of submitters compared to overall population of Auckland		
Ethnicity	**Percent of submitters**	**Percent of overall population**
Asian	18.7	28.2
European	71.2	53.5
Maori	9.7	11.5
Middle Eastern	1.6	2.3
Pacific peoples	6.6	15.5
Other	3.3	1.1

Sources: Developing the Auckland Plan 2050; Statistics New Zealand, 2021

A key factor that could partially explain the uneven ethnic representation could be the varying rate of participation among different age groups. Overall, there were disproportionately fewer younger submitters and more older submitters. For example, the 15-24 age group made up 11.1% of submitters with 14.3% of the population while the 65-74 age group made up 12.8% of submitters with 6.9% of the population. Aucklanders of non-European ethnic origins, particularly those with Māori or Asian backgrounds, are generally younger than those with European backgrounds, potentially explaining their underrepresentation in the number of submitters (Auckland Council 2021a, Statistics New Zealand 2021). Nevertheless, we recommend identifying and partnering with community organizations, along with planning more online or in-person public engagement events to better target these underrepresented communities in future plans. It is also unclear whether it was possible to make written submissions in languages other than English. Hiring additional translation staff and encouraging non-English submissions would likely increase engagement with non-English speaking communities.

The Auckland Plan 2050 emphasizes creating more opportunities for Māori self-determination, planning, and decision-making (Auckland Council 2021b). As such, "Māori identity and wellbeing" was identified as one of the six main outcomes of the plan. It is evident that Auckland Council made a concerted effort to include Māori leadership and community members' voices throughout the successive stages of public engagement. Despite this relatively comprehensive consultation process, we argue that Auckland Council's efforts were insufficient because Māori were not treated as equal partners in creating this plan.

Māori did not fully participate in the crucial early stages of plan-making, particularly in determining its general direction and major goals. The "Māori identity and wellbeing" outcome, for instance, seems to have been decided upon based on gaps identified in previous plans rather than through prior discussions with Māori themselves. Input from Māori leadership and

community members was only requested in the stakeholder engagement phase after the structure and major objectives of the plan were already firmly established.

To engage with the nineteen *iwi*, or tribes, living in the Auckland region, a number of *hui* meetings were held. Six *hui* were held with *mana whenua*, Māori who have ancestral relationships with local areas and hold customary authority over these places, to discuss ways to enhance Māori social, economic, and cultural wellbeing, as well as the protection of important cultural sites. Two additional *hui* were held to engage with *mataawaka*, Māori from other areas of New Zealand, to focus on Māori health and wellbeing in the urban context. Although these *hui* led to the incorporation of many Māori concerns, this approach of first deciding the framework and then engaging with Māori voices diminishes their capacity to make meaningful structural changes to the plan and risks replicating colonial patterns.

Auckland Council (2021c) recognizes the Treaty of Waitangi as the "foundation on which local government in Auckland works to deliver Māori aspirations," yet, it seems to have fallen short in practice. Since one of the principles Auckland Council espouses is "partnership" with Māori in local government, we recommend working more closely with these peoples, both *mana whenua* and *matawaaka*, from the initial stages of determining the plan's framework and core objectives to the final stages of implementation. Furthermore, recognizing Māori relationships with the land, *mana whenua* should have a larger role in shaping land use and managing the environment and natural resources beyond delineated cultural sites.

Despite our criticisms, we contend that Auckland's public engagement strategy was effective and comprehensive, particularly when compared to efforts from other major cities in New Zealand. Wellington, for instance, recently adopted its spatial plan for 2050 after a lengthy three-year consultation process involving over 3000 written submissions (Global Research 2020). Unlike in Auckland, however, little emphasis was placed on engaging with the Māori community, leading to a lack of focus on their concerns. Only vague statements about recognizing Māori history and working with Māori *iwi* were mentioned (Global Research 2020). Christchurch's 2048 plan, on the other hand, acknowledges Māori customary lands and aims to work with Māori to increase housing stock but received very few written submissions (Greater Christchurch Partnership 2019). As such, the Auckland Plan 2050's public engagement process could be a source for best practices and a model to emulate for cities in New Zealand and beyond.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the Auckland Plan 2050's processes in terms of Indigenous and overall public involvement represents a strong step in the right direction towards the goal of comprehensive,

effective civic engagement. However, there is still room for improvement at a multitude of steps along the way to finalizing a spatial plan such as this.

For example, through the lenses of each of their frameworks, Fung (2006) and Arnstein (1969) would, perhaps, argue that the notion of creating evidence reports to develop the plan exemplifies consultation itself. The generation of an evidence report serves to act for what we argue as proof of due diligence, meaning that participation did not necessarily have as much of an impact from the beginning of the plan development process. This is pertinent in our second point, being that spatial plans on settled lands must not merely incorporate Indigenous voices throughout the entire design process, but must put these voices at the forefront of development from the very start to the finish. If plans such as these are to seek out achieving the three key democratic values of legitimacy, effectiveness and justice, as outlined by Fung (2006), then direct participation by all facets of the public must be the foundation upon which decision-making is built.

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