# The Community Voice Method: Using participatory research and filmmaking to foster dialog about changing landscapes

Gabriel Cumming[a,1], Carla Norwood[b,*]

[a] Warren County Economic Development Commission, 501 US Hwy 158-Business East, Warrenton, NC 27589, United States
[b] Working Landscapes, PO Box 902, Warrenton, NC 27589, United States

## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

The Community Voice Method is a stakeholder engagement approach designed to foster more inclusive, informed, and ongoing civic dialog in communities without a history of successful planning initiatives. The method begins with an iterative participatory research process, resulting in the creation of an original documentary film compiled from ethnographic interviews with a wide range of stakeholders. The film, which presents a research-based distillation of local civic discourse around the topic of interest, is used in combination with quantitative data presentations to stimulate deliberation during subsequent deliberative public meetings. Using findings from a Community Voice project in Macon County, North Carolina (USA), we argue that, by preceding public meetings with participatory research, the Community Voice Method was able to promote inclusive civic dialog; provide meeting participants with accessible, trustworthy information; and help build ongoing community capacity to address local land use issues.

## 1. Introduction

On July 29, 2005, 200 people crowded into the hot gymnasium of Cowee Elementary School in Macon County, NC. They came to confront the developer of Wildflower, a 1500 acre gated subdivision slated to be built on the mountain ridge overlooking Cowee Valley. Less than 10% of the attendees spoke; all voiced concerns about the impacts the development would have on the community and the environment. However, the county lacked any land use plan or ordinances regulating development, including major subdivisions like Wildflower, and the developer made it clear that he was free to ignore resident's comments. The meeting provided no opportunities for residents to discuss the issues or formulate solutions, and as the crowd dispersed, the mood was one of frustration and alienation.

The Wildflower meeting was not the first time that Macon residents had come together around land use and development issues—indeed, attempts to enact land use regulations in the county dated back thirty years. However, during past planning processes, public participation opportunities had been both sparse and explosive, resulting in a complete failure to generate county-wide

land use policy. Ineffective communication by process organizers and the circulation of misinformation by planning opponents had fueled pent-up public suspicion, which then boiled over at confrontational public meetings. Most recently, in 2001–2002, a county-led planning process had disintegrated without even reaching a public hearing due to raucous protests and claims of insufficient opportunities for participation (Cho, Newman, & Bowker, 2005; Cumming, Guffey, & Norwood, 2008). Thus, at the height of the amenity-driven growth boom of the early 2000s, Macon County's citizens still lacked any effective public forum for addressing land use issues, and mountainside development continued without public oversight.

On August 17, 2005—less than a month after the Wildflower meeting—a different kind of public meeting was held in Macon County: a deliberative forum on local land use issues, convened as part of the Little Tennessee Perspectives (LTP) research project. Even though both meetings were addressing similar issues, in the same place, at around the same time, they were strikingly different in tone and eventual impacts. At the latter meeting, people listened to each other, shared perspectives in a respectful atmosphere, found the experience informative, and felt encouraged to participate further.

In this paper, we ask why the LTP project meetings differed so strikingly from previous planning meetings in Macon County. We argue that the difference is attributable to LTP's use of the Community Voice Method (CVM), a public engagement approach that precedes public meetings about planning with an extensive period

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 252 257 0205.
E-mail addresses: gcumming@warrencountync.org (G. Cumming),
carla.m.norwood@gmail.com (C. Norwood).
[1] Tel.: +1 252 257 3114.

of participatory research. In LTP, this research was aimed at characterizing local land use issues and the stakeholder perspectives on those issues. Our analysis finds that CVM contributed to a better process by (1) providing participants with information about salient issues that they found both accessible and trustworthy and (2) fostering the establishment of an inclusive, constructive environment for public dialog. This improved participation experience, we further argue, contributed to stakeholders' capacity to address land use issues following the conclusion of the meetings.

The paper proceeds as follows: we first situate CVM theoretically, at the intersection of deliberative public participation and participatory research, and explain how CVM addresses two persistent challenges facing public deliberation: inclusivity of diverse stakeholders and amenability to multiple forms of expression. Then, we introduce the steps of the iterative engagement process and assess the results of employing it in Macon County. We next discuss the mechanisms whereby CVM contributed to both formal deliberations and the ongoing civic life of the community. Finally, we consider the method's limitations and other applications.

## 2. The genesis of CVM: addressing challenges of participation in an amenity migration landscape

Many rural communities across North Carolina and the United States have experienced unprecedented growth in recent decades due to amenity migration (Chipeniuk, 2004; Marcouiller, Clendenning, & Kedzior, 2002; Moss, 2006; Ryan, 2002, 2006). "One of the major forces of change in rural America" (Stewart, 2002, p. 369), amenity migration is characterized by "the purchasing of primary or second residences in rural areas valued for their aesthetic, recreational, and other consumption-oriented use values" (McCarthy, 2008, p. 130). Historically, low population densities in these areas have limited the negative externalities of uncoordinated land use decisions and therefore the need for growth management policies. Thus, many rural communities are unprepared to respond effectively when accelerating growth leads to environmental or cultural degradation (Odum, 1982; Rudel, 1989), and efforts to develop planning regulations often encounter hostility (Graber, 1974; McCarthy, 2002; Sargent, 1976).

Besides exemplifying the land use and public engagement challenges described above, Macon County—a rural, Southern Appalachian county—was chosen as our study site for two additional reasons: (1) one of the authors (Norwood) had direct knowledge of the challenges facing land use planning processes in the county, having directed a nonprofit watershed conservation organization there for two years; and (2) a new grassroots group, Macon Tomorrow, had emerged to advocate for more effective civic engagement in land use planning discussions (following the failure of the 2001–2002 county planning process) and was interested in collaborating on this project. Macon Tomorrow's steering committee at the time of this project was composed of representatives of the planning board, a land trust, a regional conservation organization, a freelance writer and the county planner. Norwood had been a founding member of the group and had sustained a strong working relationship with Macon Tomorrow.

Macon Tomorrow believed that the often-raucous outcry at public meetings against even modest land use controls—which had kept Macon County devoid of land use regulation for decades—was not an indicator that most people opposed all regulation. Instead, it was symptomatic of problems with the planning processes themselves—design flaws that favored ideological grandstanding while denying participants the opportunity to reflectively consider potential policies in light of their values, concerns and hopes for the future. Norwood left her nonprofit position in 2003 to pursue a graduate degree, with the aim of developing a research project

that would foster more effective public engagement. Beginning in 2004, the authors, both graduate students, began collaborating with Macon Tomorrow to plan and implement the Little Tennessee Perspectives (LTP) project — a multi-year research and engagement effort named after the Little Tennessee River that bisects Macon County. The research methodology built upon Cumming's previous community engagement work (discussed in more depth in Cumming, 2007) and was adapted/developed over the course of the project.

Although LTP was endorsed by the Macon County Planning Board, it was not part of a formal regulatory planning process and policy change was not the immediate objective. Rather, Macon Tomorrow's aim for the process was to foster productive conversation, elicit stakeholder recommendations for addressing the effects of rapid land use change in the county—either through governmental or non-governmental means—and to build participants' capacity to advance these recommendations through sustained dialog and collective action. To do this, researchers and Macon Tomorrow members sought to address three key problems that we identified regarding public participation around land use issues in the county: participation processes needed to be better *informed* by relevant data, more *inclusive* of diverse views, and conducive of *ongoing* dialog. Over the next year, we collaboratively developed the iterative, mixed-method approach—subsequently dubbed the Community Voice Method—that we hoped would address these persistent and thorny challenges.

## 3. Approaches to participation: linking deliberation with participatory research

Public participation is a fundamental component of democratic governance (Day, 1997; Mason, 2008; Pateman, 1970; Putnam, 2000; Renn, Webler, & Wiedemann, 1995), but in many cases, "legally required methods of public participation in government decision making in the US—public hearings, review and comment procedures in particular—do not work" (Innes & Booher, 2004, p. 419). Rather, they foster a confrontational atmosphere that overwhelms many of the reasons participation is sought in the first place. As many scholars have noted, a "major problem of land use decision making is its lack of opportunities for citizens to articulate their perspectives and learn from one another" (Lando, 2003; Senecah, 2004; Stewart, Liebert, & Larkin, 2004, p. 316; Susskind, McKearnan, & Thomas-Larmer, 1999).

In response to these problems, significant theoretical and practical energy has been devoted in the past two decades to developing public participation approaches that are more effective when the "distribution of tangible losses and gains" are at stake, as is typically the case in planning (Beierle, 1999; Campbell, 2005; Lukensmeyer & Brigham, 2002; Plein, Green, & Williams, 1998; Sanoff, 2000; Smith & McDonough, 2001; Susskind & Cruikshank, 1987, p. 17). Susskind and Cruikshank (1987) argued that public participation processes should: (1) provide opportunities for genuine participation, (2) offer opportunities for systemic review, (3) be perceived as legitimate by participants, and (4) be viewed as setting a good precedent. A primary way in which alternative participation approaches have attempted to meet these criteria has been through improving opportunities for communication among the stakeholders in a process. A "deliberative turn" (Dryzek, 2000) in planning and other policy sectors has advanced approaches that foster "debate and discussion aimed at producing reasonable, well-informed opinions in which participants are willing to revise preferences in light of discussion, new information and claims made by fellow participants" (Abelson et al., 2003; Chambers, 2003, p. 309; Forester, 1999, 2008). In other words, the value of deliberation—and related approaches such as consensus building, mediation, collaborative planning and

collaborative learning—derives from the "transformative power of dialogue" (Daniels & Walker, 2001; Healey, 1996, 2006; Innes & Booher, 2004, p. 428; Mason, 2008; Susskind & Cruikshank, 1987).

Despite its potential to improve upon traditional public participation techniques, deliberative public participation and related approaches face their own challenges. Two of these that CVM attempts to address are (1) issues of representation within deliberative forums, and (2) the ability of deliberative processes to accommodate a range of modes of expression beyond rational argument. These are both elaborated below.

### 3.1. Representation in deliberative processes

Deliberation about a public issue "by anything more than a tiny minority" of stakeholders is often practically impossible (Dryzek, 2001, p. 652). Therefore, a primary challenge is how to foster deliberations that are representative of views in the broader stakeholder population, i.e. increasing the congruence between the "micro discursive sphere" of formal deliberations and the "macro discursive sphere" of civil society at large (Hendriks, 2006, p. 487; Mansbridge, 1999).

A compelling recommendation for increasing the representativity of deliberations is the proposal that discourses, rather than individuals, serve as the unit of interest. Dryzek proposes that the public sphere be regarded as home to a "constellation of discourses," with each discourse representing "a shared way of comprehending the world embedded in language" (2001, pp. 657–658). Approached in this way, the "discursive legitimacy" of deliberative public participation depends not on representing every individual stakeholder, but on including stakeholders who represent the full array of discourses on a given issue (p. 661). Therefore, "discursive representation offers a solution to this key problem of scale that confronts deliberative democracy" (Dryzek & Niemeyer, 2008, p. 485). A critical challenge then becomes how to assess discourses in a manner that is regarded as a legitimate. Dryzek and Niemeyer (2008) propose a variety of research-based methods for assessing discourses, including Q methodology, historical analyses, in-depth interviews, and opinion surveys, among others.

While we believe there is great merit in a discursive approach to deliberative representation, we caution that relying upon social science research to gauge the distribution of discourses could be misunderstood by the public and branded as technocratic and untrustworthy. Involving participants directly in the social science endeavor through *participatory research* (PR) may yield results that are more accessible and easily understood by stakeholders, more sensitive to discursive nuances (Dryzek, 2001), and deemed more trustworthy in the eyes of many participants (Wilmsen, 2008) than conventional research approaches. PR "entails involving the people directly affected by the phenomenon under study in the research process in order to produce new knowledge that can help them to effect social change" (Wilmsen, 2008:12). With roots in education, community planning and public health, PR draws on approaches such as action research, conscientization, participatory action research, and community-based participatory research (Freire, 1981; Israel et al., 2003; Lewin, 1948).

The parallels between deliberative public participation and participatory research are evident: in the arenas of policymaking and research, respectively, each aims to make stakeholder participation more meaningful and inclusive. Like deliberation, PR authorizes participants to both advance and critique arguments, including those of professional researchers or policymakers. By being self-reflexive in this way, PR aims to achieve goals that deliberation also pursues: to yield results that are deemed trustworthy by all concerned, while simultaneously building participants' capacity to advocate for their interests and engage in collective decision-making (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003;

Wilmsen, 2008). As with deliberative participation, the core principles of PR remain valuable, despite valid critiques of PR projects that have failed to embody the highest ideals of capacity-building and community transformation (Hayward, Simpson, & Wood, 2004; Schafft & Greenwood, 2003; Simpson, 2000). Given the compatibility of their goals and methods, participatory research represents a uniquely efficient way to inform and legitimate a deliberative public participation process: including stakeholders in discourse analysis can improve the accuracy of that analysis, while simultaneously assuring stakeholders that their views (and those of other participants) are fairly represented.

### 3.2. Accommodating alternate modes of expression within deliberations

Using PR or other approaches to include a fuller range of views in a deliberative process (as described above) is necessary but not sufficient for more successful deliberation: it is also important that those views can be voiced in a variety of ways. Forums that recognize only rational argument may effectively exclude stakeholders who are more comfortable with other ways of legitimating claims—e.g. through reference to deeply held values or through storytelling—even if those stakeholders are physically present (Cox, 2006; Fairclough, 2003). Therefore, accommodating different communicative genres in deliberative forums has emerged as essential to creating more representative spaces (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007). Kruger and Shannon (2000, p. 464) have called for "participatory methods anchored in interpretive theory" to encourage alternate forms of expression within deliberative public participation environments.

Although the importance of values in decision-making processes has long been appreciated (Davidoff, 1965), there remains a need to develop approaches that more accurately reflect "the true value of place" in stakeholders' lives (Kruger & Shannon, 2000, p. 464). As Cheng et al. have noted, connections that people feel to places can be powerful motivators of individual and collective action; the concept of place is therefore increasingly recognized as "a central feature of natural resource politics and management" (2003, p. 95). Scholars have used a variety of methods to assess the values that stakeholders ascribe to places: Kruger and Shannon (2000) used a civic social assessment to better meet this need, while Brandenburg and Carroll (1995) used individual stakeholder interviews to capture more nuanced perspectives on place than were typically shared during public meetings.

A related and growing literature emphasizes the importance of narrative forms of expression within participatory spaces. Sandercock has argued that storytelling is an under-developed art among academics and planners, and that embracing the power of story "widens the circle of democratic discourse" (2003, p. 11). Storytelling may "convey the bias in ostensibly universal principles" structuring deliberation, and may also "foster unforced agreements" (Polletta & Lee, 2006, pp. 718–719). However, Sandercock notes that there is a need to develop means of ensuring the coherence and trustworthiness of stories, as well as dealing with conflicting stories. She emphasizes the importance of designing spaces where this can be accomplished, but offers little guidance on how to do so.

A number of studies have used images as an alternative means of eliciting stakeholder input that can be more sensitive to place meanings, values, and stories. One approach to this has been to use photographs of different development patterns as prompts in interviews or surveys (Ryan, 2002, 2006). Stewart et al. (2004) invited participants to photograph places that were important to them and then talk about them in one-on-one interviews. However, they did not offer a way of using their findings to benefit the dialog in meetings. One attempt to accomplish this was undertaken
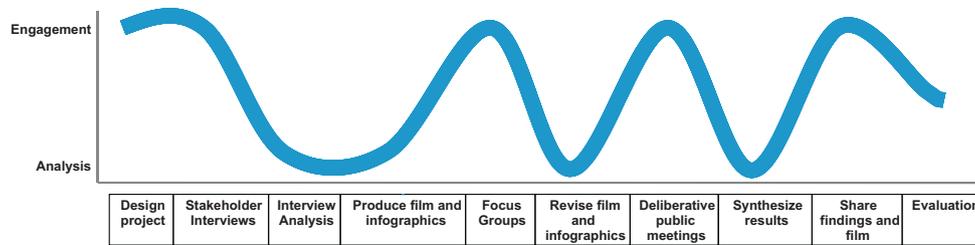
**Fig. 1.** The Community Voice Method of deliberative participation through participatory research, as developed through the Little Tennessee Perspectives project.

by Glover, Stewart, & Gladdys (2008), who invited participants to photograph places that were important to them and then talk about them—first in one-on-one interviews and then in a public meeting. Photovoice, a community-based participatory research process that has become prevalent in public health, also relies on photographs to promote stakeholder dialog (Wang & Burris, 1997).

Unlike photo-elicitation and photovoice, CVM uses documentary film production as a vehicle for data analysis and presentation, which is different in two ways: (1) it provides a more sophisticated technology for integrating the views of many individuals, and (2) it enables those views to be shared with others through interview footage, rather than requiring participants to voice them on the spot in meetings. These distinctions offer some advantages. In a CVM project, much of the work needed to achieve narrative coherence and identify areas of potential conflict is done during the period of participatory research that precedes the public meetings, rather than requiring participants to do all of this work from scratch in the meetings themselves. Further, by enabling views expressed in the more intimate setting of one-on-one interviews to be voiced within the meeting environment, CVM also helps to bridge the divide between "private setting" and "public setting" speech (Brandenburg & Carroll, 1995, p. 395; Goffman, 1959). In short, CVM's pre-meeting PR/documentary production phase positions participants to appraise, discuss and produce narratives whose intimacy, trustworthiness, and coherence would otherwise be difficult to achieve. This helps to foster deliberative public dialogs that are more inclusive of diverse views and more amenable to diverse modes of expression.

## 4. Methodology

The Community Voice Method involves multiple iterations of stakeholder input and formal analysis, the results of which are presented at deliberative public meetings (see Fig. 1, above). This iterative design ensures that the participatory research process serves not only as a means of collecting background information for a deliberative public participation event, but also as an opportunity for deliberative participation in its own right. Conversely, deliberative participation at public meetings becomes part of the research process—meeting participants, given the opportunity to respond to the findings of the preceding discourse analysis, also further enrich that analysis through their input. Expanding on the deliberative principle that learning occurs through dialog, Community Voice projects take the form of an extended, mutually edifying dialog between participants and researchers (the latter including both professional researchers and local partners). The steps of this process are described below.

### 4.1. Designing the project

The steering committee of Macon Tomorrow, a grassroots group advocating for more effective public engagement in land use discussions, were invited to join the researchers in designing and

implementing LTP. Together, this project team of researchers and community members determined project goals, procedures, and stakeholder sampling design.

### 4.2. Stakeholder interviews

Fifty in-depth, audio-recorded interviews were conducted with a variety of Macon County residents in order to document the array of local discourses on land use issues. Interviews lasted an average of one and a half hours. Interviewees were selected through a combination of *purposive* and *snowball* sampling (Bernard, 2002). Purposive sampling criteria were developed to better align the sample with the diversity of the local population, as measured through demographic traits—gender, race/ethnicity, age, occupation—as well as locally salient variables such as local/in-migrant status and political alignments. Individual interviewees were identified through snowball sampling, i.e. peer referral: stakeholders, starting with project partners, recommended other individuals whose perspectives on land use they considered particularly valuable, representative, and/or well-articulated. Interviewees then recommended other interviewees, who recommended others, and so on, thus enabling us to reach stakeholders across multiple degrees of social separation. Interviewees were selected based both on their demographic traits (as identified by recommenders) and the value of their views in the eyes of their peers (as evidenced by the number of people recommending them), resulting in a final sample that was demographically diverse but skewed toward subpopulations whose members were much more frequently recommended (i.e. older men).

A spreadsheet of prospective interviewees that listed contact information and demographic traits was continually updated as more recommendations were received; subsequent interviewees were selected to further the purposive sampling goals and include the mostly high-recommended individuals as well as increasing representation of subpopulations that were underrepresented in the sample thus far. Though snowball sampling was an imprecise means of meeting purposive sampling criteria, its value was evident in the high percentage of interviewee prospects contacted who agreed to be interviewed/recorded (98%): in insular rural

**Table 1**
Narrative framework and sample interview questions.

| Narrative element | Interview topic | Sample question |
|---|---|---|
| Orientation | Connection to place | What about this area makes it special or unique to you? |
| Complication | Changes taking place | Is this area changing? What kinds of changes do you see? |
| Result | Impacts of changes | What threats (if any) are there to the land/environment in this area? |
| Coda | Vision for the future | Overall, what do you hope will happen to this area in the future? |

communities, we have found that mentioning a mutual acquaintance (i.e. the individual who recommended the prospect) was very helpful in securing agreements to participate.

Each interview was *semi-structured* (Bernard, 2002): an interview guide was followed but not rigidly, allowing freedom to explore topics in more depth. The interview questions were organized to encourage interviewees to tell a story about local landscape change. As Table 1 illustrates, the sections of the interview corresponded to a subset of the ordered series of elements that comprise Labov's (1972) classic model of narrative: *orientation*, or scene-setting; *complication*, i.e. what happens, and the *results* of these events; and a *coda* that recapitulates the narrative and makes evaluative judgments.

### 4.3. Interview analysis

The interviews were transcribed and coded using Atlas.ti, a qualitative analysis software program. Discrete speech acts from the interviews—termed *discourse segments*—were categorized to develop two kinds of narrative typologies: *functional* and *thematic*. *Functional* coding identified the narrative function that each discourse segment performed—e.g. providing orientation or describing a complication. The top-level categories in this typology were deductively—derived from the narrative literature and anticipated by the organization of the interview guide, as described above. However, subcategories were identified inductively to reflect the particular ways in which interviewees accomplished each narrative function: e.g. we found that LTP interviewees provided orientation by articulating their connection to place through either *heritage* or *affinity*. *Thematic* coding, by contrast, differentiated interviewee narratives according to their thematic content: the particular values, worldview, and ethos being invoked. Thematic codes were developed inductively by identifying emergent categories in the course of coding the data.

### 4.4. Documentary production

Drawing on the foregoing analysis, we produced a 30-min documentary film from the recorded interview footage. The purpose of the film was to present our findings about stakeholder discourses entirely through the words of the interviewees. To do this, we drew upon our coding to identify the intersections of functional and thematic narrative types that characterized the data. From each *concourse* of discourse segments representing a given intersection, we chose *exemplars*, interview excerpts that communicated that perspective particularly effectively (Brown, 1980). To assess the rhetorical "effectiveness" of a statement, we considered not only the message, but also the "epistemic standing" (Cox, 2006, p. 310) of the speaker—whether or not a particular individual was likely to be regarded as a legitimate spokesperson for a particular discourse. Aware that seeing themselves on screen can be empowering to interviewees, we also made sure that footage from every interview was included in the final cut.

In the film, the exemplar statements were sequenced to form "multivocal narratives" (McDowell, 1996). Though interviewees' voices were the only ones heard in the film, the editorial "voice" of the researchers was also represented, resulting in "cocreation" of narratives that reflected the participatory research process (Harper et al., 2004, p. 201). Representation of different narrative types in the film was approximately proportional to their prevalence in the overall project data. The narrative arc of the film as a whole followed the same overall abbreviated-Labovian sequence—orientation, complication, result, coda—that had been anticipated by the organization of the interviews. Since the interviews were audio-recorded,

not video-recorded, we used photographs—of interviewees and the topics they were addressing—to comprise the video portion.

### 4.5. Production of topical information graphics

In order to provide stakeholders with relevant information about the issues under discussion, we produced maps, charts and infographics about land use and development trends in the county. We drew upon the analysis of the interview data to identify salient local concerns about growth and landscape change and to understand the ways in which those concerns were being framed. Then we conducted targeted analyses of geospatial and demographic data that complemented the ethnographic data, for example measuring trends in land ownership by non-locals or changes in the average elevation of homes over time. For a more complete discussion of this process, see Norwood (2009) and Norwood and Cumming (2012).

### 4.6. Focus group feedback on presentation

We pre-tested the film and infographics with five focus groups. This phase of CVM provided an opportunity to retain trustworthiness of the data and the overall process by submitting our analysis to critique by local residents. Twenty-one participants who had not previously been involved in LTP were recruited from the general public through flyers, newspaper advertisements and word of mouth; they were paid a small stipend. Participants were asked to comment on the accuracy and credibility of our discourse analysis as displayed in the video, as well as the accessibility and relevance of the maps and data presentation. We revised and clarified the material based on feedback from focus group participants. For example, we added a segment to the video about a 2004 landslide that killed four people in the county (we had not included it because we did not want to be seen as being inflammatory, but focus group participants thought it was a serious oversight not to mention the landslide) and modified many of the landscape change maps by adding more orienting information.

### 4.7. Deliberative public dialogs

Only after completing the iterative process of stakeholder input and analysis described above did we deem the groundwork laid for successful public dialog. At this point, we held four meetings, each at a different location in the county, in August 2005. The meetings were promoted in multiple ways. We previewed the video and landscape change presentation for the local and regional press prior to the first public meeting to encourage media coverage, sent mailings to interviewees and civic leaders, posted announcements in the newsletters of partner organizations, and took advantage of the informal social networks of partners.

The meetings ran approximately two hours, and each followed the agenda given below:

(1) informal conversation and snacking as participants arrive;
(2) welcome by County Planner and project introduction by authors;
(3) land use change presentation;
(4) documentary film presentation;
(5) small group discussions, facilitated by trained community volunteers: participants respond to the presentation and articulate their own recommendations for addressing local land use issues;
(6) small groups report back to full group;
(7) facilitated full group discussion: identifying intersecting recommendations, ways forward, obstacles to overcome;

(8) evaluation/wrap up (including evaluation forms and an opportunity for participants to write postcards directly to the board of commissioners, which project organizers would deliver at the next board meeting).

Considering the community's history of very contentious public meetings about planning, the format was carefully designed to foster a sense of ease and openness among participants. The welcome by the County Planner was an important aspect of the agenda, because even though many people were distrustful of the planning department and planning board, the new county planner was a widely respected local resident.

### 4.8. Disseminating project outputs

Following the public meetings, the authors and local partners synthesized the ideas generated through the deliberations. The findings were shared with the media, policymakers and participants through a short written report, which contained a description of the methods employed, results of the meeting evaluation, and recommendations for improving future planning processes, as well as names of all the interviewees, a list of all recommendations from the meetings, and resources related to public participation and innovative community planning. A DVD containing the documentary film and the infographic presentation was also produced and distributed to project partners and other interested parties.

### 4.9. Ongoing tracking and evaluation

Evaluation, which had occurred throughout the project due to its iterative participatory research design, continued in the wake of the public meetings. By conducting follow-up interviews with project partners, monitoring the agendas of local boards, tracking media coverage in two newspapers (one local and one regional), and monitoring the distribution and use of the project DVD, we assessed the project's influence on local civic discourse and policymaking. Not merely retrospective, this evaluative process was designed to inform subsequent local initiatives and refine the Community Voice Method. We have also continued to monitor outcomes through participatory observation by staying involved in local research and engagement efforts in the years since LTP.

## 5. Results

### 5.1. Interview results

Table 2 compares the demographic characteristics of our interviewees to the county as a whole. Because older men were recommended much more often in the snowball sample, our final interviewee pool is also skewed along age and gender lines, though purposive sampling criteria served as a partial corrective to this distortion.

Through analysis of the interview data, we identified the functional narrative types through which interviewees expressed their connection to place (*orientation*), their views on change (*complication/result*), and their evaluative/prescriptive perspectives on how to address those changes (*coda*). Many interviewees provided *orientation* by recounting their family's protracted connection to a place (*heritage*); an even more prevalent way of articulating that connection was by describing the attributes of the place that they found attractive (*affinity*). While the former narrative type was the exclusive province of multigenerational residents, the latter was characteristic of in-migrants' speech but sometimes employed by "locals" as well. All interviewees viewed the local landscape as changing (*change*), usually due to the effects of population growth

**Table 2**
Interviewee and county demographics.

| | Macon County population (2000) | LTP interviewees (2004–2005) |
|---|---|---|
| *Gender* | | |
| Male | 47.9 | 57% |
| Female | 52.1 | 43% |
| *Race* | | |
| White | 97.7% | 96.8% |
| Black | 1.3% | 1.6% |
| Hispanic (any race) | 1.5% | 1.6% |
| Other | 1.6% | 0 |
| *Age (adults over 20 only)*[a] | | |
| 20–34 | 18.2% | 8.6% |
| 35–59 | 44.7% | 36.2% |
| 60+ | 37.1% | 55.2% |

[a] Because some interviews were with multiple individuals, the table represents individuals rather than interviews. Also, a single interview conducted with five high school students (all under 20 years old) is not represented in the age distributions but are represented in gender and race calculations.

and land development; none felt that it was unchanged (*continuity*). However, interviewees were divided in their assessment of the effects of change: while the largest number saw this growth/change as detrimental (*loss*), others saw it as beneficial (*gain*) or simply a fact of life (*inevitability*). Interviewees also varied in their view of land use regulation: a small number had clearly articulated and deeply felt positions in favor of *individuals'* property rights, while a similar minority were outspoken advocates of *collective* growth management approaches. However, the majority of interviewees had more nuanced—and frequently self-contradictory—positions: they felt that some form of planning was needed to protect valued attributes of place, but were less sure of the mechanisms that were appropriate.

In the interview data, these narrative types were found in varied combinations that revealed the true complexity of local discourse around land use issues. For example, interviewees' positions on growth/change were not necessarily indicative of their positions on planning/property rights. Another example is illustrated in Table 3, which shows how *heritage* and *affinity* orientations were each used to justify both *collective* and *individual* codas. This finding challenges the widespread assumption that "locals" all opposed planning while in-migrants all favored it.

Thirty-eight thematic narrative types were also identified through open coding of the interview data; these were used to characterize the specific lenses through which land use issues were being addressed. Interview content reflecting these widely addressed themes guided production not only of the documentary film, but also of the infographics/maps.

### 5.2. Mapping and infographics results

The 15-min landscape change presentation that preceded the screening of the documentary video featured population and land use trends that were commonly cited in the interviews, had a story that could be illuminated through geospatial analysis and could be clearly illustrated to a lay audience. Below is a list of the infographics and maps that were developed over the course of the project and shared at the public meetings:

Past and projected population growth, 1990–2020.
Degree of out-of-state land ownership.
County maps showing locations of homes 1950–2005.
Number of parcels 1983–2003.
Average size of parcels, number of subdivisions.
Land subdivision between 2002 and 2005.
Photos of changing development pattern.

**Table 3**
Exemplar statements illustrating the different combinations of orientation type and coda type that were found in LTP discourse.

|  | Collective | Individual |
|---|---|---|
| Heritage | "As an old timer and one who has roots here, I guess people like me would like to see it stay the same. Obviously that's not going to happen. There's going to be change, and what we want to do is plan so that that change will make it at least be as good and maybe better than what we have now. But we've got to do some land planning or something to curtail the growth or regulate the growth so that we still maintain our good, clean environment and good way of life that we all enjoy." | "This is a tract of land that was settled by my ancestors, and I'm seventh generation. . . and it's still all in one tract with the family. And hopefully it stays that way. . . . I've kind of got this thing about if people's got property and pay their taxes then I feel like basically they should do what they want to with it. As long as they do it. . . responsibly." |
| Affinity | "The principal product of the forest, I think most foresters would agree at this point, is clean water—and it is vitally important to us. I would like to see the flood plain kept as free of houses as possible and I would like to see the tops of the ridges and the forested slopes kept this way, because I think we need it for clean air, we need it for clean water, and we need it for the rural uses of land that's going to keep us a rural economy and a rural landscape." | "One of the biggest things I like about it is the freedom from the tight restrictions that I grew up with in the major cities.. There is no law against everything that you do around here.. We feel like one of the nice parts about the area is that it is our responsibility to maintain our part of it and it's not an induced responsibility. It's ours that we feel from within. We take a lot of pride in that." |

Change in average elevation of homes built in each decade.
Viewshed analysis and parcelization on one mountain/subdivision.
Build-out scenarios at subdivision scale and community scale, based on analyses of other mountainside development patterns across the region.

### 5.3. Public meeting results

The four LTP public meetings attracted a total of 170 participants, with 70 at the largest single meeting. Nearly 40% of the participants were Macon County natives, and another 15% had lived in the county for more than twenty years. While it is impossible to know how the non-governmental sponsorship of the meetings affected attendance, the LTP meetings attracted similar numbers of participants as did meetings held earlier the same year by the Planning Board, which was seeking input on the development of a high impact land use ordinance. However, LTP was much less well attended than previous public hearings at which specific policies were being considered. The degree and enthusiasm of participant response to the CVM process exceeded our expectations and demonstrated that there was significant interest in alternatives to formal regulatory processes.

The meetings' success as deliberative forums was strongly affirmed by data from participants' evaluation forms: 98.5% of respondents agreed that the process was an effective way of helping people talk about the changing landscape. Participants valued "the opportunity to exchange ideas." The process was deemed *inclusive* and *trustworthy*: 89% of respondents affirmed that the documentary film succeeded in representing "all different perspectives," and 100% agreed that the small-group discussion format enabled all meeting attendees to participate. Participants also attested that their deliberation had been *informed*, not only by information about fellow stakeholders' perspectives, but also by previously unavailable quantitative information: 91.5% of respondents reported learning something valuable about land use trends. Furthermore, LTP attracted new participants to the land use conversation: nearly one in four reported attending public meetings about land use issues less than once a year.

Respondents also evinced enthusiasm for further dialog: 98% indicated that they were *more* supportive of having a public conversation about land-use planning in Macon County *after* participating in this process than they had been beforehand. For many participants, Community Voice represented an unprecedented experience of constructive, rather than destructive, public participation: as one LTP meeting participant put it, "I had never attended anything like this." Another participant's note, addressed to Macon County's elected leadership, reflects increased confidence instilled through participation in the meeting: "I feel that I've neglected voicing my opinion on planning for many years because I do feel like the issues facing us are complex. Please know that there is wide support for the planning process."

Following the meetings, the authors and a Macon Tomorrow representative categorized the ideas generated during the small group discussions for how the county should proceed in addressing land use change. These topical categories were then ranked; the top ten are listed below.

Top Ten Visions (the number following each vision indicates how many small groups independently listed it)

(1) Increased and improved planning (13).
(2) Protecting water quality/watershed and storm water management (9).
(3) Expanding restrictions on building on ridge tops (7).
(4) Encouraging incentives for voluntary conservation by land owners and developers (7).
(5) Clustering development in appropriate areas (6).
(6) Regulating development on steep slopes (6).
(7) Encouraging economic development that delivers quality jobs (5).
(8) Harmonizing growth with community character (5).
(9) Protecting/improving appearance of main commercial corridors (5).
(10) Assuring and expanding affordable housing opportunities (5).

### 5.4. Post-project results—building civic capacity

Following the completion of the public meetings, the authors' facilitating role was concluded; post-project initiatives were conceived and led by our community partners and other local stakeholders. However, we continued to stay involved through monitoring and evaluation, and also by speaking about LTP with groups throughout the region. To measure the effects of LTP on ongoing civic discourse and collective action, we monitored post-project developments through follow-up interviews, local media, and participant observation. As described below, some effects of our project were evident rather quickly; others only became apparent at a further remove.

Compared to previous planning processes and environmental research projects in Macon County, LTP was successful in generating new and trustworthy information that continued to be cited after the meetings. In the year following the project, information generated by LTP appeared in a minimum of 12 local and regional newspaper articles, as well as three editorials calling for increased growth management and planning. The project generated growth statistics and information about local views that were subsequently

cited by nonprofit organizations in grant proposals and newsletters, and also circulated informally in the community. Copies of the DVD containing the documentary and land use trends presentation were distributed virally across western North Carolina by multiple actors, including local governments, nonprofits, planning professionals, and other academics: we estimate that more than 3000 people in the region have seen this video since the original meetings in 2005. The quote below, from a 2006 follow-up interview, illustrates the degree to which people talked about the project after its completion:

> When I'm sitting around having lunch or hanging out with people, I'll hear people quote the [LTP] video a lot and say 'oh, so-and-so, you need to watch that video because you won't believe what so-and-so said on there and you need to see that presentation because that will change your mind.' I hear that a lot and that's good. That's even better than the planning board quoting it, because those are real people.
> Stacy Guffey, former Macon County Planner

LTP also influenced the agendas of organizations and boards within in the county. Seven months after the public meetings, Macon Tomorrow sponsored an all-day workshop, From Ideas to Action, that was designed to increase the capacity of local residents to take leadership on the land use issues identified through LTP. Speakers from around the region were invited to share examples of successful processes around community planning, steep slope regulation and job creation strategies rooted in cultural heritage.

In addition, project partners credited LTP with elevating the issue of steep slope development sufficiently to prompt the planning board to appoint a committee to consider regulations for the first time (pers. comm., Desmond, 2006). However, this failed to result in policy because the subcommittee was dominated by development industry representatives and quickly disbanded itself. Despite this policy failure, the then-planning board chairman told one of the authors that LTP "moved the planning conversation ahead two years" in Macon County (pers. comm., Penland, 2008).

LTP has contributed to planning capacity outside of Macon County, as well. In neighboring Jackson County, leaders attributed the successful 2006 election of three pro-planning county commissioners in part to use of the LTP DVD as a campaign tool (pers. comm., Lyons, 2008; pers. comm. Shelton, 2008). These commissioners went on to enact the first county ordinances in the region that regulated development pattern and thereby addressed some of the concerns voiced through LTP.

LTP's deliberative public participation process was deemed so successful that many civic groups requested presentations about the process, and it was used as a model for subsequent participatory planning in the region and elsewhere across the state. For example, in 2007–2008, the Region A Council of Governments sponsored a regional planning initiative across seven counties in western North Carolina, including Macon. The Mountain Landscapes Initiative represented the first time that the region's political and development industry leaders came together to publicly support growth management. A Macon Tomorrow steering committee member who had been an LTP partner was a key catalyst in developing this initiative. The authors were invited to manage a six-month outreach/engagement process utilizing CVM, involving 70 interviews and 10 public meetings, which led up to a regional charrette. The charrette, in turn, catalyzed community-scale planning initiatives in at least three locales.

## 6. Discussion

We argue that, by preceding public meetings with an iterative, participatory research process, the Community Voice Method

fostered the unprecedented establishment of inclusive, constructive forums for civic dialog in which participants were able to draw upon accessible, trustworthy information. Below, we articulate five distinct characteristics of CVM that supported the successful meeting environment. We then describe two ways in which the legitimacy enjoyed by the public forums helped to support continued dialog and therefore build capacity of residents to engage in planning. Finally, we discuss the limitations of the approach.

### 6.1. Effects of preceding deliberative public meetings with participatory research

#### 6.1.1. Foregrounding local voices

Unlike most public meetings, the opening presentation at a Community Voice forum is primarily delivered through the voices of local stakeholders—by means of the documentary film. This communicates respect for stakeholder perspectives, elevating them to the same status as those of the project organizers, public officials, or outside 'experts' who usually speak at such events. This approach was acknowledged by meeting participants, including one who wrote: "thanks for actually having local voices on the video instead of outsiders who tend to have the resources to be decision makers."

On a metacommunicative level (Briggs, 1986), the very existence of the film also conveys respect, since it is a record of the considerable effort that has already been expended listening to stakeholders and assessing the local constellation of discourses. This demonstration of commitment to inclusivity goes a long way toward overcoming whatever initial suspicions meeting participants may harbor regarding the project and its organizers.

#### 6.1.2. Representing diverse perspectives

By representing, to the greatest degree possible, the full range of stakeholder discourses, the film ensures that diverse voices are accorded standing in the public deliberation that ensues. One participant expressed appreciation for the "variety of real people" featured. One compelling reason to present stakeholder perspectives through the documentary medium is that a film comprised of interview clips can include voices that would otherwise be absent or underrepresented at a public meeting (Levine, Fung, & Gastil, 2005). In our experience, stakeholders who have historically been marginalized or are uncomfortable with public speaking are frequently less intimidated by a one-on-one interview. In this way, Community Voice helps to correct for differences in the deliberative capacities of stakeholders.

#### 6.1.3. Framing information through local discourse

Fostering informed deliberation is not simply a matter of presenting participants with information; to be useful, the information must be presented in a way that participants find accessible and relevant (Nickerson, 2003). Guided by the discourse analysis, the project team was able to frame data in ways that were appropriate to the local discursive context. The documentary film presents findings on stakeholder views entirely through local discourse. The maps and visualizations, meanwhile, have been honed by participant input to optimize their clarity and salience. Soliciting end-user feedback on landscape visualizations, which has been shown to be valuable (Pettit, Raymond, Bryan, & Lewis, 2011), enabled deliberations to benefit from 'expert' analyses, e.g. quantitative assessments of landscape change trends that would not otherwise be accessible to most participants. This discursive approach yields increased legitimacy, allowing community members to assess "what is relevant and what is not" (Parkinson, 2003, p. 190)

#### 6.1.4. Challenging preconceptions

The opening presentation at a Community Voice meeting is designed to be clear but not to suppress complexity; indeed, the

participatory research findings frequently serve to complicate participants' preconceptions of the issues and of other stakeholders. For example, one participant discovered that "a lot more people than I thought believe in planning." Participants are thereby challenged to consider problems in new ways, rather than to simply reenact previous arguments. The juxtaposition of interview clips in the film can expose tensions between different stakeholders' views, but it can also reveal surprising areas of agreement. This challenges participants to view each other not simply as proponents of a single agenda, but as multifaceted individuals.

### 6.1.5. Setting a more reflective tone for deliberation

Each of the preceding characteristics contributes to setting a more reflective tone in the public meetings than would otherwise be the case. The documentary film projects one type of communicative event (interviews) into another, very different one (public meetings), and in doing so, fosters a hybrid discourse that imbues public deliberation with some of the intimacy and thoughtfulness of an interview. Viewing the documentary exposes meeting attendees to the personal reflections of fellow stakeholders, many of whom they may know. This tacitly gives the audience permission to be reflective themselves, to articulate values, and to employ more narrative and less antagonistic ways of speaking.

The resulting conversation at a Community Voice meeting is unlike any that most of its participants have previously had—one in which it is possible to talk about difficult, complex topics in more productive ways and to overcome, at least temporarily, the negative, contentious debates that have been the norm. In the words of former County Planning Director Stacy Guffey, LTP provided "a way to take people back to the basics about planning . . . about 'let's just agree on the things that we love about Macon County and that they're important and that we should have a dialog about how to protect those things'" (pers. comm., 2006).

To take advantage of this hybrid discourse, it is important that small group discussions—rather than an open question-and-comment period—follow immediately upon the documentary screening. This point bears emphasizing because it is counterintuitive: after presentations, it is customary for presenters to open the floor for questions and comments from the audience. In denying this impulse, the facilitator can initially seem to be repressing participation rather than fostering it. We have observed, however, that the first people to speak in open question/comment periods are usually those with confident, crystallized positions on an issue—the same people who are likely to speak at a more traditional meeting. As soon as such a speaker launches into a familiar polemic, other attendees become defensive again, and much of the reflective potential established by the documentary is lost. By immediately directing people into small group conversations at the conclusion of the documentary, the facilitator can maintain a more reflective and inclusive tone. Facilitated small-group deliberation deprives confident ideologues of their accustomed spotlight, but assures everyone else that their voice will also be heard and recorded.

### 6.2. Contributions to ongoing civic dialog and capacity building

Evidence from post-project evaluation of LTP corroborates past studies, which have shown that deliberation can increase the ability of citizens and institutions to undertake future collective problem solving (Carpini, Cook, & Jacobs, 2007; Gastil, 2008). The evaluation process indicated that LTP met Susskind and Cruikshank's (1987) standards of fairness, and thereby contributed to the ongoing civic discourse about land use planning in the county and region following the meetings. Evidence of these contributions is seen in the two primary ways in which the project has been locally leveraged since its completion. The first has involved project participants, the media and other individuals referencing content from the project

directly—such as statistics, maps or quotations from the video—to build a case for better planning. The second involved people referencing the design of the project to advance the adoption of more inclusive, deliberative participatory process, such as the regional planning initiative that adopted the CVM approach. In both of these ways, LTP contributed to (1) the region's evolving civic discourse about planning and public engagement and (2) the increasing collective capacity of stakeholders in the region to effectively address landscape change issues. Neither would have been possible nor effective unless LTP had been widely regarded as a trustworthy process.

### 6.3. Limitations

Despite its unique benefits, the Community Voice Method also comes with certain limitations, including those listed below.

- *Time and cost.* The Community Voice Method is more time-consuming, and thus more costly, than less intensive public participation techniques. However, we have found that the budget compares favorably to shorter duration but more concentrated public participation processes such as charrettes.
- *Technical requirements.* Some steps of the method require specialized skills. For members of a community or organization to undertake a Community Voice project, therefore, they must either engage the services of trained professionals or receive the necessary training themselves, as well as securing access to the computer technology needed. These technical demands limit the transferability of the method, although increasing access to recording devices and editing software may reduce some of these barriers in the future.
- *Non-participation.* Like other public participation techniques, the Community Voice Method cannot ensure participation by all stakeholders. Stakeholders may opt not to participate in any phase of the process, from the initial interviews (though refusal to participate in this phase was very infrequent during LTP) to the public meetings. Though the preceding interviewing/documentary production process is designed to improve the inclusivity of deliberations at the public meetings, there are still absent voices: this approach, like any participatory process, is never perfectly representative. However, the reliance on discursive representation mitigates against this inevitability.
- *Local capacity to implement next steps.* As discussed earlier, translation of the ideas and momentum generated during the public meeting into action following the meetings depends on the capacity or motivation of local partners to facilitate this transition. Outside researchers/organizers can no longer play a guiding role at this point. The success of implementation efforts therefore varies depending on partners' capabilities and interests.

We do not believe that these limitations compromise the value of the method; however, they should be factored in when beginning a Community Voice project, so that expectations are appropriate.

## 7. Applications

The Community Voice Method was conceived to help address a particular issue: polarized debates about rapid landscape change caused in Macon County, NC. However, the challenges to effective public participation in this case—a lack of established resource governance institutions and forums for civic deliberation, plus inequalities in the empowerment of different stakeholder groups—are not unique. Therefore, we believe that the Community Voice Method is applicable to a wide variety of settings and issues. Since 2004, we have used CVM in projects that have

involved more than 1000 participants in nine rural North Carolina counties. In 2010, CVM was successfully adapted to a strikingly different cultural and resource management context: the Turks and Caicos Islands, where it was used to engage fishermen in developing management policies for the local sea turtle fishery. This project is also the first use of CVM to directly guide policy development. Most recently, the Method was used in Warren County, NC—a low-income, majority-minority community—to help build civic capacity at a different intersection of issues: economic development and the local food system. Information about each of these efforts and the resulting project videos are available at www.communityvoicemethod.org.

We have also used CVM to train academic and community-based researchers in the communicative, ethical, and technical competencies that are critical to successful participatory research. Graduate and undergraduate students from such fields as Anthropology, Environmental Science, Geography, Planning, and Public Policy, as well as community partners representing government and civic organizations, have received field training by working on CVM projects. A pilot course in the method in 2009 was well received by students and participating stakeholders alike.

## 8. Conclusion

The Community Voice Method has demonstrated the ability to catalyze informed, inclusive deliberation and lay the groundwork for ongoing civic capacity building. This iterative, participatory approach to public engagement has enabled the authors, in collaboration with community leaders, to foster civic dialog about complex and contentious topics where prior efforts had failed to successfully engage stakeholders.

However, alienation and disempowerment of stakeholders in planning and resource management processes remains a profound problem, as does the continued degradation of much-valued landscapes and the erosion of community identity and sense of place. The insufficient or ineffective public participation opportunities that often characterize local land use debates can render the negotiation of growth management strategies practically impossible. In such cases, there is a palpable need among local residents to discuss deeply felt issues of community and landscape change in a more respectful and productive setting, ideally one that can begin addressing the challenges they perceive. Innovative, deliberative approaches such as the Community Voice Method should become the norm, not the exception, in navigating these critically important local decisions.

## References

Abelson, J., Forest, P.-G., Eyles, J., Smith, P., Martin, E., & Gauvin, F.-P. (2003). Deliberations about deliberative methods: Issues in the design and evaluation of public participation processes. *Social Science and Medicine*, 57(2), 239–251.

Beierle, T. C. (1999). Using social goals to evaluate public participation in environmental decisions. *Policy Studies Review*, 16, 75–103.

Bernard, R. H. (2002). *Research methods in anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira.

Brandenburg, A. M., & Carroll, M. S. (1995). Your place or mine? The effect of place creation on environmental values and landscape meanings. *Society & Natural Resources*, 8, 381–398.

Briggs, C. L. (1986). *Learning how to ask: A sociolinguistic appraisal of the role of the interview in social science research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, S. R. (1980). *Political subjectivity: Applications of Q methodology in political science*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Campbell, K. B. (2005). Theorizing the authentic: Identity, engagement, and public space. *Admin and Society*, 36(6), 688–705.

Carpini, M. X. D., Cook, F. L., & Jacobs, L. R. (2007). Public deliberations, discursive participation and citizen engagement: A review of the empirical literature. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 7, 315–344.

Chambers, S. (2003). Deliberative democratic theory. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 6, 307–326.

Cheng, A. S., Kruger, L. E., & Daniels, S. E. (2003). Place as an integrating concept in natural resource politics: Propositions for a social science research agenda. *Society & Natural Resources*, 16, 87–104.

Chipeniuk, R. (2004). Planning for amenity migration in Canada. *Mountain Research and Development*, 24(4), 327–335.

Cho, S.-H., Newman, D. H., & Bowker, J. M. (2005). Measuring rural homeowners' willingness to pay for land conservation easements. *Forest Policy and Economics*, 7, 757–770.

Cornwall, A., & Coelho, V. S. (2007). Spaces for change? The politics of participation in new democratic arenas. In A. Cornwall, & V. S. Coelho (Eds.), *Spaces for change? The politics of citizen participation in new democratic arenas*. London: Zed Books Ltd.

Cornwall, A., & Jewkes, R. (1995). What is participatory research? *Social Science and Medicine*, 41(12), 1667–1676.

Cox, R. (2006). *Environmental communication and the public sphere*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Cumming, G. B., 2007. *Explorations in discursive ecology: Addressing landscape change with rural North Carolinians* (Doctoral dissertation). University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC.

Cumming, G. B., Guffey, S. J., & Norwood, C. M. (2008). Opportunities and challenge in community capacity building: Lessons from participatory research in Macon County, North Carolina. In C. Wilmsen, W. Elmendorf, L. Fisher, J. Ross, B. Sarathy, & G. Wells (Eds.), *Partnerships for empowerment: Participatory research for community-based natural resource management* (pp. 127–146). London: Earthscan.

Daniels, S. E., & Walker, G. B. (2001). *Working through environmental conflict: The collaborative learning approach*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

Davidoff, P. (1965). Advocacy and pluralism in planning. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 31(4), 421–432.

Day, D. (1997). Citizen participation in the planning process: An essentially contested concept. *Journal of Planning Literature*, 11, 421–434.

Dryzek, J. S. (2000). *Deliberative democracy and beyond: Liberals, critics, contestations*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Dryzek, J. S. (2001). Legitimacy and economy in deliberative democracy. *Political Theory*, 29(5), 651–669.

Dryzek, J. S., & Niemeyer, S. (2008). Discursive representation. *American Political Science Review*, 102, 481–493.

Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. London: Routledge.

Forester, J. (1999). *Deliberative practitioner: Encouraging participatory planning processes*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Forester, J. (2008). Participation as dialogue, debate, and negotiation: Entangled promises and practices. In S. Odugbemi, & T. Jacobson (Eds.), *Governance reform under real-world conditions: Citizens, stakeholders, and voice* (pp. 209–218). Washington, DC: The World Bank.

Freire, P. (1981). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.

Gastil, J. (2008). *Political communication and deliberation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Glover, T. D., Stewart, W. P., & Gladdys, K. (2008). Social ethics of landscape change: Toward community-based land-use planning. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 14, 384–401.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Doubleday.

Graber, E. E. (1974). Newcomers and oldtimers: Growth and change in a mountain town. *Rural Sociology*, 39, 504–513.

Harper, G. W., Lardon, C., Rappaport, J., Bangi, A. K., Contreras, R., & Pedraza, A. (2004). Community narratives: The use of narrative ethnography in participatory community research. In L. A. Jason, C. B. Keys, Y. Suarez-Balcazar, R. Taylor, M. I. Davis, J. A. Durlak, & D. H. Isenberg (Eds.), *Participatory community research: Theories and methods in action* (pp. 199–217). Washington: American Psychological Association.

Hayward, C., Simpson, L., & Wood, L. (2004). Still left out in the cold: Problematising participatory research and development. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 44(1), 95–108.

Healey, P. (1996). The communicative turn in planning theory and its implications for spatial strategy formations. *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design*, 23(2), 217–234.

Healey, P. (2006). *Collaborative planning: Shaping places in fragmented societies*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hendriks, C. M. (2006). Integrated deliberation: Reconciling civil society's dual role in deliberative democracy. *Political Studies*, 54, 486–508.

Innes, J. E., & Booher, D. E. (2004). Reframing public participation: Strategies for the 21st century. *Planning Theory and Practice*, 5(4), 419–436.

Israel, B. A., Schulz, A., Parker, E., Becker, A., Allen, A., & Guzman, J. R. (2003). Critical issues in developing and following community-based participatory research principles. In M. Minkler, & N. Wallerstein (Eds.), *Community-based participatory research for health* (pp. 53–76). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kruger, L. E., & Shannon, M. A. (2000). Getting to know ourselves and our places through participation in civic social assessment. *Society & Natural Resources*, 13, 461–478.

Labov, W. (1972). The transformation of experience in narrative. In W. Labov (Ed.), *Language in the inner city: Studies in black English vernacular*. University City: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Lando, T. (2003). The public hearing process: A tool for citizen participation, or a path toward citizen alienation? *National Civic Review*, 92(1), 73–82.

Levine, P., Fung, A., & Gastil, J. (2005). Future directions for public deliberation. *Journal of Public Deliberation*, 1(1), 1–13.

Lewin, K. (1948). *Resolving social conflicts*. New York: Harper.

Lukensmeyer, C. J., & Brigham, S. (2002). Taking democracy to scale: Creating a town hall meeting for the twenty-first century. *National Civic Review*, 91(4), 351–366.

Mansbridge, J. (1999). Everyday talk in the deliberative system. In S. Macedo (Ed.), *Deliberative politics: Essays on democracy and disagreement* (pp. 211–239). New York: Oxford University Press.

Marcouiller, D. W., Clendenning, J. G., & Kedzior, R. (2002). Natural amenity-led development and rural planning. *Journal of Planning Literature*, 16(4), 515–542.

Mason, R. J. (2008). *Collaborative land use management: The quieter revolution in place-based planning*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

McCarthy, J. (2002). First world political ecology: Lessons from the wise use movement. *Environment and Planning A*, 34, 1281–1302.

McCarthy, J. (2008). Rural geography: Globalizing the countryside. *Progress in Human Geography*, 32(1), 129–137.

McDowell, M. J. (1996). The Bahktinian road to ecological insight. In C. Glotfelty, & H. Fromm (Eds.), *The ecocriticism reader: Landscapes in literary ecology* (pp. 371–392). Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.

Minkler, M., & Wallerstein, N. (2003). *Community-based participatory research for health*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Moss, L. (2006). *The amenity migrants: Seeking and sustaining mountains and their cultures*. Wallingford, UK: CABI.

Nickerson, R. S. (2003). *Psychology and environmental change*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Norwood, C. M., 2009. *Making maps that matter? The role of geospatial information in addressing rural landscape change* (Doctoral dissertation). University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Norwood, C. M., & Cumming, G. B. (2012). Making maps that matter: Situating GIS within community conversations about changing landscapes. *Cartographica*, doi:10.3138/carto.47.1.34

Odum, W. E. (1982). Environmental degradation and the tyranny of small decisions. *BioScience*, 32, 728–729.

Parkinson, J. (2003). Legitimacy problems in deliberative democracy. *Political Studies*, 51, 180–196.

Pateman, C. (1970). *Participation and democratic theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pettit, C. J., Raymond, C. M., Bryan, B. A., & Lewis, H. (2011). Identifying strengths and weaknesses of landscape visualisation for effective communication of future alternatives. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 100, 231–241.

Plein, C. L., Green, K. E., & Williams, D. G. (1998). Organic planning: A new approach to public participation in local governance. *The Social Science Journal*, 35(4), 509–523.

Polletta, F., & Lee, J. (2006). Is telling stories good for democracy? Rhetoric in public deliberation after 9/11. *American Sociological Review*, 71(October), 699–723.

Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Renn, O., Webler, T., & Wiedemann, P. (1995). A need for discourse in citizen participation. In O. Renn, T. Webler, & P. Wiedemann (Eds.), *Fairness and competence in citizen participation: Evaluating models for environmental discourse* (pp. 1–16). Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Rudel, T. K. (1989). *Situations and strategies in American land-use planning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ryan, R. L. (2002). Preserving rural character in New England: Local residents' perceptions of alternative residential development. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 61, 19–35.

Ryan, R. L. (2006). Comparing the attitudes of local residents, planners, and developers about preserving rural character in New England. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 75, 5–22.

Sandercock, L. (2003). Out of the closet: The importance of telling stories and storytelling in planning practice. *Planning Theory and Practice*, 4(1), 11–28.

Sanoff, H. (2000). *Community participation methods in design and planning*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Sargent, F. O. (1976). *Rural environmental planning*. Vermont: University of Vermont.

Schafft, K. A., & Greenwood, D. J. (2003). The promise and dilemmas of participation: Action research, search conference methodology and community development. *Community Development*, 34(1), 18–35.

Senecah, S. L. (2004). The trinity of voice: The role of practical theory in planning and evaluating the effectiveness of environmental participatory processes. In S. P. Depoe, J. W. Delicath, & M.-F. A. Elsenbeer (Eds.), *Communication and public participation in environmental decision making* (pp. 13–33). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Simpson, L. (2000). Aboriginal peoples and knowledge: Decolonizing our processes. *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 21(2), 137–148.

Smith, P. D., & McDonough, M. H. (2001). Beyond public participation: Fairness in natural resource decision making. *Society and Natural Resources*, 14, 239–249.

Stewart, S. I. (2002). Amenity migration. In K. Luft, & S. MacDonald (Eds.), *Trends 2000: Shaping the future, proceedings of the 5th outdoor recreation & tourism trends symposium* East Lansing, MI, September 17–20, 2000, (pp. 369–378). East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University, Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Resources.

Stewart, W. P., Liebert, D., & Larkin, K. W. (2004). Community identities as visions for landscape change. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 69, 315–334.

Susskind, L., & Cruikshank, J. (1987). *Breaking the impasse: Consensual approaches to resolving public disputes*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers.

Susskind, L., McKearnan, S., & Thomas-Larmer, J. (1999). *The consensus building handbook: A comprehensive guide to reaching agreement*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Wang, C., & Burris, M. A. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health Education & Behavior*, 24(3), 369–387.

Wilmsen, C. (2008). Negotiating community, participation, knowledge, and power in participatory research. In C. Wilmsen, W. Elmendorf, L. Fisher, J. Ross, B. Sarathy, & G. Wells (Eds.), *Partnerships for empowerment: Participatory research for community-based natural resource management* (pp. 1–22). London: Earthscan.

**Gabriel Cumming** is the Economic Development Director of Warren County, North Carolina. He received a PhD in Ecology from UNC Chapel Hill, where he was a member of the Society of Fellows. He holds a BA in Religion from Swarthmore College.

**Carla Norwood** is Director of Working Landscapes, a nonprofit devoted to rural revitalization, civic engagement and sustainable resource management. She received a PhD in Ecology from UNC Chapel Hill, where she was a member of the Royster Society of Fellows, and also earned degrees from Duke University (Master of Environmental Management 2001, BA 1996).

Gabriel and Carla are partners in work and life. As graduate students at UNC Chapel Hill, they developed the Community Voice Method, which was then honed through postdoctoral research in Lisa Campbell's lab at Duke University Nicholas School of the Environment. Now based outside of academia, they remain committed to using engaged research to help communities make plans for the future that can better reflect local perspectives and honor landscape function. They live in Manson, NC, with their 3-year-old daughter, Juniper.