

## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Urban Revitalization and Participatory Governance

A Discursive Analysis of Policy Deliberation in Newark

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How do the discursive mechanisms of governance provide the means for the maintenance of power of certain groups in a democratic society? What role is played by elites in discursively shaping and influencing institutions and processes of democracy? These questions emerge from Gramsci's (1971) notion of hegemony through social consent, where the strategy for discursive domination is embedded in an integrative political, economic and ideological system. As a concrete manifestation of such an integrative system, policymaking is conceptualized as a complex social and political phenomenon that extends beyond the technical presentation of facts from which experts extract solutions to public problems. Rather than following a clear linear path, policymaking involves the interaction of a variety of facts situated in competing arguments about the social world. Such arguments configure interrelated quasi-causal statements and normative assumptions into a set of policy discourses. Policy discourses are composed of technical policy statements expressed as programs and practices within a problem setting, and normative social goals and values. Political coalitions are formed on the basis of shared beliefs and meanings and

struggle in the public arena for the dominance of their discourse, and by implication the policy solutions/programs contained within them.

Fischer's policy deliberation approach provides the methodological orientation as well as the analytical framework for this study. It posits the policy process as a dynamic interaction between four inter-related discourses of ideological social choice, societal vindication, situational validation and technical verification. Hoppe and Van DeGraaf utilize this model to identify core and peripheral elements of policy beliefs, and demonstrate that policy elites protect the core of their policy beliefs while managing opposition at the periphery. This study combines the Fischer and Hoppe - Van DeGraaf framework for an in-depth exploration of developmental conflict in Newark, New Jersey. It attempts to uncover the discursive mechanisms powerful groups use to gain dominance, and exclude opposing groups in context of Newark's 'Renaissance'. Through an empirical examination of policy discourses, I demonstrate the how policy elites superficially incorporate the elements of the opposition's discourses within their own argumentative structure, without internalizing the core values of the opposition.