

**LEARNING AS LEVERAGE FOR CHANGE IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT:**

A CASE STUDY OF SANTO ANDRÉ'S GEPAM PROJECT FROM 1998-2003.

BY

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores the ways in which a municipal government in Brazil developed itself as a learning system through the support of a capacity-building project funded by the Canadian International Development Agency. The project, which began in 1998, focuses on building capacity for adaptive, community based watershed management in the municipality of Santo André. It involves a team of Canadian partners led by the University of British Columbia Centre for Human Settlements. Santo André is a city of 600,000 people in the Sao Paulo metropolitan area.

The focus of the thesis is on Santo André's planners' perspectives about the individual learning, and related organizational changes, that were induced by the project. In-depth interviews were conducted with twenty-one staff holding a variety of planning responsibilities. The findings are that, while not planned for in the design of the project, learning occurred at three levels: learning by the planners as individuals engaging in daily practices, learning through changes in the planners' relationships with one another and with residents of Santo André's Watershed Protection Area, and learning through and about the organisational processes of the municipal government itself. It is concluded that international capacity-building projects can contribute to the enhancement of local planning to the extent they are structured to address the potential for learning at all three of these levels.

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Thank you to my supervisor Peter Boothroyd, for your comments, questions and suggestions. Your patience and helpfulness in thinking through ideas and clarifying concepts was invaluable. Thank you to Erika de Castro for your guidance and support over the past two years, both in Canada and Brazil. Working with you has taught me so many valuable lessons and opened the door to an array of possible futures I never would have considered before. Thank you to Dr. Robert Woollard for your insights and your thought-provoking questions. Thank you to friends and family for your kind words of encouragement and your ideas. Finally, thank you to Jason Emmert for the hot tea, the endless morning chats about conceptual frameworks, and for never tiring of listening to and challenging me.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND RATIONALE

Shifting political and economic conditions in Brazil are contributing to a diverse range of challenges in managing city regions - from issues concerning economic development, land use planning and livelihood generation, to the protection of the environment and promotion of the health and well-being of citizens.<sup>1</sup> Some municipal governments, notably those led by the Worker's Party (PT),<sup>2</sup> are implementing innovative practices and strategies with a strong focus on direct democratic participation, often also taking on increased responsibilities for addressing regional issues, according to the federal party's political mandate to promote participatory governance at the municipal level as the expression of full citizenship rights and responsibilities. Complementary to this, the structure and delivery of international development assistance to Brazil, and worldwide, is changing, marked by an increasing interest in collaborative learning and planning models and partnerships and exchanges among municipal governments as well as between governments and learning institutions, in recognition of the need for new strategies to address the complex challenges of liveability faced by many city regions.<sup>3</sup> This combination of factors provides rich opportunities for exploration of theories in relation to the innovation and changing practices being instituted by some local government systems in the Brazilian context. As part of this exploration, the research for this thesis involved speaking individually with planners<sup>4</sup> about the dynamics created by an international technology transfer project that provided external capacity building assistance, and about the learning roles, relationships and processes associated with the organisation and functioning of the city government in its attempts to move towards better regional planning.

Local environmental health and liveability in peri-urban areas is an area of increasing concern for growing metropolitan regions worldwide, especially where it concerns resources perceived as valuable to the sustainability of the urban populations. Ideas about ways to manage

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<sup>1</sup> Lopes de Souza, Marcelo. Mudar a Cidade: Uma Introdução Crítica ao Planejamento e à Gestão Urbanos. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 2002. 519.

<sup>2</sup> The Brazilian Worker's Party, the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) is a leftist political party with representation at both federal and municipal levels of government. Founded by Lula Inacio da Silva, a former metallurgists union leader and currently the president of Brazil, the PT has a strong political mandate for social and economic reforms including the promotion of direct democratic participation in governance as an expression of citizenship rights and responsibilities. According to this mandate, many municipal administrations engage in such processes as participatory budgeting, where elected citizen councils of representatives engage in a year long process of debates and plenary sessions to determine spending for municipal revenues. In addition to winning the most recent federal election (2002), the PT has in recent years been winning and holding an increasing number of seats in local government throughout Brazil.

<sup>3</sup> Evidence of this is available from a wide range of sources. To name just two, see:

CIDA. Delivering Aid Effectiveness or

Levinger, Beryl, and Jean McLeod. Togetherness: How Governments, Corporations and NGOs Partner to Support Sustainable Development in Latin America. United States Government Printing Office: Inter-American Foundation, 2002. 5-6.

Notable examples in Brazil of partnership initiatives include the Latin American poverty reduction cities network URBAL, or the United Nations funded cities technology exchange PIMEX.

<sup>4</sup> In this thesis, the term "planners" is hereafter used to describe staff, both civil servants and politically appointed, employed by the city government in positions ranging from administrative to technical. Drawing on Friedmann (1987), planners are those individuals who engage in some part of the process of 'transforming knowledge to action in the public domain.' Planners interviewed for this thesis were directly involved with aspects of the GEPAM project during its development and implementation.



these areas are shifting, as the landscape and concepts about the landscape undergo change. Some city governments are beginning to recognize their impacts on local regions as well as their dependency on them as spaces where the effects of economic growth and restructuring on populations, especially the most marginalized, are played out. In this context, the city of Santo André, SP, Brazil faces a range of challenges and opportunities, due largely to its position of regional economic leadership. Though the story of how Santo André's PT municipal government, currently in their third term of office<sup>5</sup>, has attempted to address these issues over the course of the past 5 years is a unique tale providing interesting insights in many different ways, it is beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, this thesis explores in depth one set of processes within this larger story, specifically, the usefulness of an international technology transfer project that provided external capacity building assistance in the organisation and functioning of a learning planning system within the municipal government.

The focus of this research brings forth some of Santo André planners' perspectives about a series of processes of organisational learning and change occurring as the PMSA (Prefeitura Municipal de Santo André – municipal government of City of Santo André) engaged in addressing and working through the challenges of development in the peri-urban watershed protection area of the city between 1998 and 2003. These processes are examined in relation to the GEPAM project. GEPAM (Gerenciamento Participativo das Areas Mananciais, which translates from Portuguese to "Participatory Management of Watershed Areas"), is a comprehensive plan for adaptive watershed management created and implemented as part of a collaborative ongoing learning exchange that has been occurring since 1998 and will continue until mid-2004 between the municipal government of Santo André (PMSA) and the Centre for Human Settlements (CHS) at UBC, Vancouver, Canada with funding from a bilateral aid project of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Brazilian Agency for International Cooperation (ABC – Agencia Brasileira de Cooperação Internacional). GEPAM can be conceptualized as an external input to Santo André's system of local government, which is made up of individuals, structured relationships, organisational structures and processes.

The purpose of the GEPAM project, as stated in the initial proposal, was to make watershed management in Santo André more participatory and responsive to the needs of informal settlements in the watershed protection area.<sup>6</sup> The intent was to do this by the adoption of an ambitious adaptive management model, which included changes in the way information about the watershed protection area was collected and managed, as well as reforms of the structures of land use decision making, and implementation of more comprehensive and accessible means of public participation in community development. The project involved capacity building initially through training strategies, knowledge exchanges in the form of workshops and seminars, and the production of materials and tools for planners at the level of the local government. Through the various strategies and activities of the project, planners engaged in reflection about their daily practices, about the structures of relationships within and through the organisation, and about the "organisation's functioning processes.

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<sup>5</sup> The PT in Santo Andre, led by Mayor Celso Daniel, was elected to local government from 1989-1992, 1997 – 2001, and 2002- 2005. Following the death of Celso Daniel in January 2002, the government has been led by Mayor Joao Avemileno, previously the vice mayor. During their three terms in office they have been awarded more than 13 international prizes for initiatives ranging from gender and citizenship promotion, administrative reform, waste collection to slum upgrading. See the national PT website at [www.pt.org.br](http://www.pt.org.br), or the Santo Andre website at [www.pmsa.gov.sp.br](http://www.pmsa.gov.sp.br) for more information.

<sup>6</sup> GEPAM Inception Report. Vancouver: Centre for Human Settlements, UBC, 1998.

This thesis focuses on the learning and change processes identified by planners involved in the various aspects of the GEPAM project. This includes learning by the planners as individuals engaging in daily practices, learning through changes in the planners' relationships with one another and with residents of the Watershed Protection Area (WPA) and learning through and about the organisational processes of the PMSA itself. Learning and change have been occurring throughout the various phases of the GEPAM project, from the initial proposal process and needs assessment, through information gathering, training, and creation of various departments and application of the adaptive management model, to the activities implemented as part of the 3 GEPAM Pilot Projects in the communities of Parque Andreense, Pintassilgo and Paranapiacaba.

## 1.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this research is to present an in-depth exploration of an organisational learning process so as to enrich existing theories about learning and change in organisations, by:

- a) Considering the effects of political context and other factors on the functioning of a learning planning system.
- b) Examining opportunities and constraints encountered by planners in their attempts to develop and function as a learning system.
- c) Developing an analytical framework for future examinations of attempts to foster organisational learning through external capacity building assistance.

## 1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Within the broad existing body of literature about organizational learning and change, ranging from management sciences<sup>7</sup>, to social psychology<sup>8</sup>, there is an abundance of prescriptive, interventionist theory<sup>9</sup> suggesting how to identify or become a learning system<sup>10</sup>, or how to become better learners by working at the micro level of individual relationships and practices<sup>11</sup>. However, there is a dearth of empirical research providing examples in support of the prescriptions, especially research on capacity building projects such as GEPAM.

Easterby-Smith and Araujo suggest that studies of microprocesses in organisations should seek to explain in more depth the "dynamics" of learning processes, rather than simply attempting to demonstrate that learning occurred or show the results of that learning.<sup>12</sup> The primary focus of this research is to present such a study of learning and change processes, "dynamics", in one case.

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<sup>7</sup> Seminal works in this field include Argyris (1957), (1962), (1964), (1982), (1985), (1990), Argyris and Schön (1974), (1978), (1996), Crozier (1964), (1971), (1970), (1980), (1993), Morgan (1997), and Senge (1990).

<sup>8</sup> Notable publications in this field include Ahrne (1990), Levitt and March (1988) and Nicolini and Meznar (1995).

<sup>9</sup> For a full overview on the range of such theory see Easterby-Smith, Burgoyne and Araujo, (2001).

<sup>10</sup> See in particular Argyris (1964), Garvin (1993), Hague (1973), or Lessem (1991) for examples of this.

<sup>11</sup> See again Argyris and Schön (1978), Crozier (1963), for examples of this, and Mumford (1979) for a critical reflection.

<sup>12</sup> Easterby-Smith, Mark and Luis Araujo. "Aprendizagem Organizacional: Oportunidades e Debates Atuais." In *Aprendizagem Organizacional e Organizacao de Aprendizagem: Desenvolvimento na Teoria e na Prática*. Eds. Easterby-Smith, Mark, John Burgoyne e Luis Araujo. São Paulo: Editora Atlas S.A., 2001. 27. In support of this view see also Miner, A.S., and S.J. Mezias. "Ugly duckling no more – pasts and futures. of organizational learning research." *Organization Science*. 7 (1): 88-99, 1996.

In their 2001 overview of developments in theory and practice of organisational learning, Easterby-Smith and Araujo argue that research in the field would benefit from stronger or more well developed foci in three areas:

- a) Empirical research<sup>13</sup> supporting and characterizing existing theories about organisational learning and learning organisations,
- b) Theoretical debate and connection between different schools of thought about organisational learning and learning organisations – for example, North America with the rest of the world, and
- c) Practical tools or models for implementation of organisational learning processes in learning organisations.<sup>14</sup>

The thesis speaks to all three of these. First, it describes the organisation and change processes of the GEPAM project by presenting the perspectives of the local planners involved in it and relating this to the social, organisational and political context within which they work. Secondly, the fact that the GEPAM project was created and implemented as part of a collaborative learning process involving Canadian and Brazilian planners provides an opportunity to consider cross-cultural aspects of capacity building. Thirdly it is intended that the framework for analysis developed for this thesis can itself be considered as a 'methodological' contribution to the literature on learning systems.

#### 1.4 LIMITATIONS

The municipal government in Santo André is a complex organisation operating in a specific political, legal, economic and social historical context. This thesis cannot present an in-depth description of this context or of the wide range of challenges faced by planners in Santo André. Neither can the thesis provide a full description of the GEPAM project. The thesis is restricted to analysing what can be learned about learning processes from key people involved in the project. The intent of this research is not to analyse the role of external development assistance in general. Contributing to better understanding of the dynamics of learning and its relation to change processes, the thesis may provide useful insights for planners into the connections among individual knowledge, institutional structures and processes and social change.

#### 1.5 THE INTERVIEW AS MEANS

The primary means of inquiry I used to study GEPAM were personal interviews with key actors involved in the development and implementation of the GEPAM project. As the focus of the thesis is on organisational learning, it addresses learning and change by individual actors, their relationships with one another and to those community members they engaged with as part of their work, and the planning processes and structures that shaped the actors work in the organisation. Analysis of documents and observations of changes in practices are employed as supplementary methods. I decided to concentrate my time available for the field research on

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<sup>13</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, empirical research is understood to mean that research which is based on data gathered through observation or experience. This definition is drawn from Mish, Frederick C., Ed. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. 10th Edition. Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 1996.

<sup>14</sup> Easterby-Smith, Mark and Luis Araujo. 2001: 26-31.

interviews, judging that they would provide a rich picture of how the learning processes related to GEPAM most affected planners values, concepts, skills and daily practice. I am aware that in presenting the views in this thesis, I am affected by my own experience with the GEPAM project. I was a participant in some aspects of the project for two years, meeting and working closely with a number of planners from the Prefeitura Municipal de Santo André (PMSA) as well as from the Centre for Human Settlements at the University of British Columbia. Owing to the time I spent participating in the project as well as researching its various aspects, (including several months spent living in one of the Pilot Project areas), I have many good friends among the community members affected by the project activities, which may somewhat bias my understanding of the relationships between planners and community members. I am also aware that as a researcher engaged in academic endeavour within the discipline of planning, I have a responsibility to ensure that the research is rigorous and to present as faithfully as possible the views of the interviewees, regardless of whether they accord with my own.

The views and opinions of the key planners interviewed may be affected by their position within the PMSA. As explained in section 3.2 of the thesis, planners at the PMSA can be categorized into two general groups: civil servants and politically appointed staff. Civil servants typically have technical qualifications, in fields such as engineering. They have job security but low decision making power and limited access to information. Political appointees lack job security, but often have significant decision making power and some control over access to information. These differences affect how each planner respectively views the functioning of the organisation, as well as their relationships with others in the organisation. The differences also affect the planners differing levels of motivation for engaging in learning or change processes, and for sharing information with a researcher such as myself about these learning and change processes. Levels of trust between interviewees and the researcher may have been affected by the interviewees' perceptions of their personal job security, and of their perceptions of the strategic usefulness of sharing, or not, particular information with the researcher. An Ethical Review was completed through the Office of Research Services of the University of British Columbia prior to the undertaking of the research. Consent was also obtained from the Prefeitura of Santo Andre to undertake the research. Confidentiality of interviewees' comments was assured, and written consent obtained from all interviewees, consistent with the approved research protocol.

## 1.6 ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

The main body of this thesis is organised in three distinct sections. The first presents the context in which the GEPAM project was developed and implemented. The second reviews literature on theories of organisation, organisational learning, and planned organisational change and decision making, for the purpose of contextualizing and framing this case study. The third provides an analysis of the interviewed planners perceptions of the learning and change processes occurring in the PMSA through the development and implementation of the GEPAM project between 1998 and 2003, relates this to the theories earlier discussed, and assesses implications of the findings for designing future capacity building projects such as GEPAM.

The first section begins with a brief explanation of the major changes in Brazilian legislation surrounding watershed management and municipal governance, and an overview of the responses occurring in recent years at the municipal and regional levels of Brazilian government. Also, some examples of the ways in which municipal governments have attempted to address the issues of liveability in environmentally sensitive peri-urban areas in recent years are provided to show the degree of innovation of the approach taken by the municipal government in Santo André with the Community Based Watershed Management project. A brief discussion of the PT's political ideology and their mandate for municipal level governments is presented, to explain some of the

motivations and functioning of the Santo André PMSA. The first section concludes with a discussion of how Santo André's politics and institutional structure have affected the processes associated with the GEPAM project and the relationships among the actors involved. This provides the reader with a basis for understanding the factors relevant to the learning and change processes of the project within the larger frameworks of the PMSA, in comparison with other initiatives in peri-urban environmental management, in the context of changing issues and challenges of urban watershed management in Brazil.

The second part of the thesis presents a review of relevant literature in the fields of organisational learning, planning theory, systems theory of organisation, planned organisational change and decision making, connecting them to the research completed for this thesis. Beginning with theories about learning and knowledge acquisition processes, then progressing to theories on the application of these processes in the practice of 'planning as social learning'<sup>15</sup>, and moving to theories of how organisations are structured and function, and how this relates to planning, I build a model of learning and change processes within an organisation that serves as an analytical framework for my field research. The usefulness of this model is shown through a discussion of theories about planners as change agents in the organisation, of the different ways in which decisions can be made in organisations, and of the political nature of decision making and change processes. These theories are then drawn together to form a new framework for the analysis of planners' perceptions that follows in the third section.

The third section begins with a presentation of the research methods used and the analytical framework. Planners' perceptions as related through the interviews are then presented and analysed, supported by data gathered through participant observation and document analysis. Finally, implications of the research findings are discussed and concluding remarks made.

## 2. CONTEXT

### 2.1 CHANGING GOVERNANCE IN BRAZIL – The rise of the PT and their municipal agenda.

Brazil's transition to democracy through the late 1970s and into the 1980s, culminating in the creation of a new constitution in 1988, has meant significant structural shifts in the federal, state and municipal levels of power. In concert, decentralization of government and devolution of responsibility for managing a wider range of political, social and economic aspects of the local region at the city level reflect the effects of the policies of macro-economic restructuring, lowering of trade restrictions and the increasing inability of a centralized state to adequately meet the needs of a fractured population whose increasingly high income disparity and unequal land tenure distribution have contributed to regionalized poverty both at the national level and within the context of each particular city region.<sup>16</sup>

In order to deal with their expanded responsibilities (stemming both from legislative downloading, as well as from the political mandates of some city governments motivating them to engage in a broader range of issues), some municipalities are seeking more effective ways of managing resources, capturing wealth, generating income and promoting liveability, often through the reorganization of local governance structures, the building of new ties and learning

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<sup>15</sup> Friedmann, John. Planning in the Public Domain: From Knowledge to Action. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987. 181-224.

<sup>16</sup> Castro, Erika Maria Teresa Giongo de Camargo. Social inequality and the policies of water in the Sao Paulo Metropolitan Area, Brazil: a study of urban environmental politics through a case study of the Guarapiranga reservoir recovery program. Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1998.

partnerships between citizens and the state, between different sectors of the state or different states, or between the state and international agencies and donors. For example, Santo André recently created a new Secretariat for Economic Development and Regional Action, and is focusing on development initiatives promoting active citizenship, among them the GEPAM project and an integrated slum upgrading project.<sup>17, 18</sup> Some theorists suggest that confronted by the problems of poverty, environmental degradation, and economic instability, city governments, in increasingly turning to a politics of regional autonomy, are looking for ways to empower themselves with new knowledge, identify leverage points, actively pursue change in order to capture more resources, and improve quality of life, security, and liveability. They are motivated to reconceptualize the relationship between the city government and the citizen.<sup>19</sup> Depending on their political outlook, theorists differ on the points where change can and should happen, but are nonetheless in agreement on the extreme importance of good governance.<sup>20</sup>

In the case of PT municipal governments, one of the primary roles of the city government is to encourage and act as the direct channel for participation in governance by the population. Partnerships between city governments to share ideas for new governance strategies, as well as to exchange resources, and to receive aid from international donor agencies, are increasingly valued as tools for development.<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, there has been a general lag in the structure and delivery of development aid in moving away from the traditional state-led processes to address these new projects that are on the cutting edge of change.<sup>22</sup>

## 2.2 WATERSHED PROTECTION AREAS: A new municipal responsibility

Since the 1970's there have been several important legislative changes, relevant to environmental protection in peri-urban areas in São Paulo state. According to São Paulo State Laws in 1975 and 1976, Watershed Protection Areas (WPA) were designated to protect hydrographic basins serving as supply sources for urban areas. However, large urban areas, notably São Paulo, continued to inch closer to exhausting their water supplies and rates of unregulated settlement continued to expand in peri-urban areas, often water-supply catchment areas. Neglect to enforce the protection laws, progressive impoverishment of the population, and the low cost of peripheral lands, now rendered useless for industrial use, increased the

<sup>17</sup> See Denaldi, Sampaio and Gois (2000), as well as Oliveira and Denaldi (1999) for comprehensive summary of this initiative.

<sup>18</sup> Greater detail about the economic situation in Santo Andre, and the various potentials perceived for regional development can be found in a study published by the SERE institute (2002). More information about existing and past initiatives can be found on the PMSA website at <http://www.pmsa.gov.sp.br>.

<sup>19</sup> Rodriguez-Pose, Andres, John Tomaney and Jeroen Klink. "Local empowerment through economic restructuring in Brazil: the case of the Greater ABC region." *Geoforum*, 32:459-469, 2001.

<sup>20</sup> By 'good governance' the assumptions implied are that of protection of the rights of full citizenship including active participation of civil society, and accountable government.

<sup>21</sup> See the official PT website for a statement of their municipal political platform at <http://www.pt.org.br>, as well as the PMSA website for a statement of this as it relates specifically to Santo Andre <http://www.pmsa.gov.sp.br>

<sup>22</sup> See Escobar (1995) for an illuminating in-depth discussion of the problems with North-South aid partnerships and the tendencies for them to perpetuate relations of domination between donors and recipients. Another very valuable contribution to the explanation of these difficulties is presented by Few (2001), who discusses how planners as implementors of aid, strategically manage public participation to control it, effectively constraining the success of development as citizen empowerment. See also Angeles and Gurstein (2000), for a brief overview of existing discourse about international development aid in the context of partnerships between external funders and local governments in promoting participation in capacity building vs. capacity development initiatives, as well as for an exploration of the limits of these approaches, with specific reference to the GEPAM project in Santo Andre.

occupations of the watershed areas. In the 1990's, as environmental concerns began to appear more frequently on political agendas, watershed protection could no longer be ignored as an area of central concern. Following this, responsibility for regulation of WPAs was assigned to the municipal government according to State Law 7.663 (1991). This law prescribes the formation of watershed area committees, consisting of members of local government and civil society, for the purposes of creating policy for hydrographic resources management. Additionally, São Paulo State Law 9.034 (1997) mandates that emergency plans, environmental plans, and sustainable development plans be created at both the municipal and regional levels for watershed protection areas and submitted to the watershed councils for approval.<sup>23</sup>

Unfortunately, the reality of enforcing regulations restricting development activity in WPAs has been limited. Many of these areas became heavily settled when the WPAs were created and relocation of populations is not often a financially viable option for municipalities. In order to facilitate municipal action to address these issues, State Law 9.866 (1997), the Law of Protection and Recuperation for Watershed Areas, legally recognises pre-existing settlement in the WPAs and permits the formulation and execution of emergency plans providing basic services to the settlements. It also grants authority to municipalities to create specific laws governing watershed protection areas (WPAs) within their jurisdiction. The creation of these new laws has effectively decentralized watershed management to the regional basin committee level, where representatives of state and local government, as well as members of civil society are mandated to formulate management plans cooperatively. Any new legislation proposed by a municipal government or committee must be in accordance with the existing state laws and regional basin plans approved by the watershed protection committees.<sup>24</sup>

### 2.3 THE SPECIFIC CASE OF SANTO ANDRÉ: Planners and the WPA

Santo André, with an area of 175,000 square km and a population of over 665,000, is a mid-sized Brazilian city - one of 39 municipalities in the Greater São Paulo Metropolitan area. Since Brazil's adoption and subsequent rejection of an import substitution strategy in the 1950s, the city has held an important role in the development of São Paulo's economic base in automobile manufacturing, becoming one of the most important development centres in the country and drawing great in-migrations of people. Due to macroeconomic restructuring and industrial decentralization which has occurred in recent years, (characterized by the relocation of industrial plants to the interior of the state,) Santo André and the surrounding São Paulo Metropolitan Area have suffered significant losses in formal sector employment, great shifts in population migration and settlement patterns as well as growths in the informal sector. This has contributed to an increased outflow of population settlement into peripheral areas of the metropolitan region, combined with low municipal tax revenues from businesses and higher demands for services, a lack of fiscal and other resources to deal with issues of development regulation or basic service provision. The resultant rapid and poorly organised urban growth, evident in the landscape in the form of "unequal and chaotic" land use development, is characteristic of many Brazilian cities.<sup>25</sup>

In Santo André, favelas<sup>26</sup> and informal settlements in the WPA involve situations where legal title to land is not held and residents construct their own dwellings and infrastructure. This

<sup>23</sup> GEPAM Inception Report. 1998:12

<sup>24</sup> GEPAM Inception Report. 1998:12

<sup>25</sup> GEPAM Inception Report. 1998:8

<sup>26</sup> In the Brazilian context, the complex range of informal settlements varies in degrees of legality and established infrastructure from slums or shanty towns with little or no infrastructure and no legal tenure, to favelas, where self-built infrastructure, or government provided upgrades might exist, but still no legal

challenges the existing environmental legislation, as well as the municipal bylaws for land use. The dwellings constructed are often dangerous to the residents themselves due to precarious locations, or their lack of basic services such as sewage treatment or waste collection.<sup>27</sup> The Billings Reservoir WPA, designated in 1975, places restrictions on land use in a large portion of the São Paulo Metropolitan area, with the intent of protecting water quality and quantity in the hydrographic basins serving as catchment areas for São Paulo Metropolitan Area's drinking supply reservoirs. Sixty percent of Santo André's land area is included in the Billings WPA. The municipality experienced great difficulty in enforcing these restrictions and were unable to create any planning guidelines in response to this legislation during the 1970s, as legislative power and financial resources were highly concentrated in centralized federal and state levels of government.<sup>28</sup> There are approximately 123 favelas in the municipality of Santo André, representing a population of more than 67,000. In the larger Metropolitan Region of São Paulo it is estimated that over 30% of the population live in irregular housing – ranging in degree from favelas to situations of quasi-legal tenure.<sup>29</sup>

During the late 1990s, some planners at the PMSA recognised that the master planning and clientelistic structure of service delivery so common to local governments in Brazil until that time, was not adequately meeting the needs of their citizens, especially in regards to the protection of the WPA, and would need to be fundamentally challenged.<sup>30</sup> These planners in Santo André were beginning to recognize that in order to strengthen the possibilities for effective local agency and enforceable policy with regards to the WPA, it would be necessary to think and act in ways they had not previously done in the context of their day-to-day working environment. Ideas about fostering good civil society and self-reliant development at the municipal government level were mainstream within the Brazilian Workers Party (PT) representing the political left, which was winning an increasing number municipal elections throughout Brazil.

Now in its third term in office in Santo André (1989-1992, 1997-2000, 2001 –2004), the municipal PT government actively involves itself in various administrative reforms and legislative changes, the purpose of which are to address some of the perceived failures of past local governance, notably, the absence of an adequate system of land use planning.<sup>31</sup> According to Santo André's Municipal Constitution, all residents of the municipality have rights to "education, health, information, employment, nutrition, leisure, free circulation, security, social assistance, transportation, housing, basic hygiene and a balanced environment."<sup>32</sup> The current administration devotes significant resources to initiating projects and securing funds to achieve greater economic and social organization by stimulating greater economic efficiency, justice and social equality.<sup>33</sup> During all three of their terms in office, Santo André's PT have implemented a

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tenure is held, to varying categories of informal settlement where some degree of legal tenure may be held, or contested rights to tenure may exist due to illegal subdivision or legislation making settlement illegal imposed after development had occurred.

<sup>27</sup> GEPAM Inception Report. 1998:8

<sup>28</sup> GEPAM Inception Report. 1998:11

<sup>29</sup> GEPAM Inception Report. 1998:9

<sup>30</sup> From documented communications between planners at PMSA (1997-1998), as well as from interviews with planners, recalling perspectives held about functioning of local government in late 1990's (2003). See also Rodrigues-Pose, Tomaney, and Klink (2001)

<sup>31</sup> Examples of these reforms can be found in the PMSA's participatory long range visioning strategy currently underway -*Cidade Futuro*, as well as in the thematic focus of many decisions deliberated upon by the participatory budgeting process "Orcamento participativo" which include a heavy focus on infrastructure and service provision as well as other land use concerns.

<sup>32</sup> PMSA website. <http://www.pmsa.gov.sp.br> Accessed June 16, 2003.

<sup>33</sup> GEPAM Inception Report. 1998:9



participatory budgeting process, and have created a series of municipal councils (made up of elected community members, appointed government and private sector representatives,) who meet regularly in a formal space to define sectoral policies, debate the implementation of urban management systems, and accompany the monitoring and evaluating of existing projects and projects. There are also councils formed around specific topics, such as health, education, the rights of youth, and housing. Santo André's PT's mission is to actively pursue "a deepening of democracy in the planning organisation, through a more complete inclusion of citizens in decision making..."<sup>34</sup> The GEPAM project is complementary to this mandate for direct democracy and enhanced citizen participation, offering opportunities for new decision making fora in which the local government might involve citizens, for example environmental stewardship. This was notable as the first time the concept of environmental protection was included in the government's agenda for purposes beyond simply 'sanitation'. It also offers new training tools for processes such as conflict resolution and community economic development, involving collaboration between planners and community members.

The existing context in Santo André for local government strategies promoting community participation stressing environmental stewardship values, includes models of participatory decision making among watershed stakeholders, as well as an awareness of other types of existing projects involving partnerships between local governments, communities, and outside resources, such as Primary Environmental Care and Social Capital for Urban Upgrading, Local Agenda 21 type projects.<sup>35</sup> These are comparatively relevant to the GEPAM project because they also provide new tools for local governments which similarly focus on concepts of citizen participation, social capital, capacity building for self-help, and the promotion of stewardship values as connected to livelihood concerns. Just as with the GEPAM approach, they offer change strategies and tools for more efficient functioning of local government, with varying degrees of success in promoting good relations between community and government. The significant difference however, is that none of them involve external capacity building assistance for a project whose purpose is explicitly to change the structure of local government and its relations to communities.

New approaches to watershed management in Brazil are notable for their compatibility with and support of projects that promote change in the makeup of municipal service delivery structure, and active restructuring of administrative aspects of information management, and decision-making structures of the government. In general, the field of watershed management in Brazil is currently dominated by a focus on citizen participatory fora and stakeholder roundtables. It has been noted by several authors that many of these organizations fall into the trap of spending far too much time creating policy and not enough time actually following it or doing any other substantial work for that matter.<sup>36</sup>

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An interesting example of an innovative project that brings together the constitutional ideals with the PT value of popular participation as expression of citizenship rights can be found in Santo André's integrated urban poverty reduction strategy that coordinates infrastructure upgrading, education and professional training, basic income projects, community health and micro-credit formation in targeted favelas in the city to attempt to ameliorate living conditions, connect informal economy to the formal sector and generate livelihood.

<sup>34</sup> Klink, Jeroen. Unpublished Paper, February 2003.

<sup>35</sup> See Pretty and Gujit (1992), Beall (2001), Katz (2000), Mwangi (2000) for examinations of specific projects and analysis of their strengths and weaknesses. Ostrom (1996) is also interesting, presenting the example of 'co-production' in Brazil, where government actively tries to foster social capital among disempowered communities for development projects.

<sup>36</sup> See Abers and Keck (2003), Frank (2003), and Nogueira (2003), for an overview of this, and of issues related to the functioning of hydro-basin subcommittees, etc.

## 2.4 GEPAM AND THE PMSA: A project to change the system

The GEPAM project is a comprehensive plan for adaptive watershed management, developed and implemented between 1998 and 2004 (the research for this case study is limited to the period between 1998-2003) by the municipal government of Santo André (PMSA) and the Centre for Human Settlements (CHS) at UBC, Vancouver, CANADA as a bilateral aid initiative funded by the Canadian International Development Association (CIDA) and the Brazilian Agency for International Cooperation (ABC). The purpose of the GEPAM project, as stated in the initial proposal, was to make watershed management in Santo André more participatory and responsive to the needs of informal settlements in the watershed protection area.<sup>37</sup> An ambitious adaptive management model, through which project objectives would be developed and adopted to change the way information about the watershed protection area was collected and managed, as well as to reform the structure of local land use decision making, and to implement better, more accessible means of public participation in community development was the means by which this goal was to be achieved. The project involves capacity building through training strategies, learning exchanges through workshops and seminars, and the production of materials and tools for municipal planners to use in their daily practice.

As a bilateral aid project, the basic GEPAM concept for technology transfer involves a community of Brazilian and Canadian planners who function as an operational group, developing planning systems that could be used to plan and implement urban, environmental and participatory management together with local citizens. The initial Canadian participants were experts in the areas of administrative mechanisms, processes or procedures for the management of uncertainty, change, conflict, as well as technical expertise in watershed management. The Brazilian participants were skilled in citizen engagement techniques and the promotion of direct democratic participation processes, as well as strategic planning processes. The initial idea of the project was "to develop and implement a process, for urban management in the watershed protection area that could develop the complementary abilities of the Canadian and Brazilian partners."<sup>38</sup>

GEPAM's innovation and ambitiousness involved a holistic and interdisciplinary approach to environmental policy formation and implementation. The 3 main elements of the GEPAM approach are:

- 1) Ways of collecting data and managing it – for knowledge and informed decision making processes,
- 2) Ways that stakeholders participate in management of the area, and
- 3) Ways that conflicts are managed between stakeholders for use of the area

GEPAM's creators wanted it to involve people at the community level, in the processes of planning and development as stewards of the environment. At the level of the planning organisation, it was geared towards changing attitudes and comprehensions of the socio-economic roots of the informal settlement issue. It also intended to put in place polluter pay mechanisms, and to investigate possibilities for income generation strategies for the municipality.<sup>39</sup> The

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<sup>37</sup> GEPAM Inception Report. 1998.

<sup>38</sup> GEPAM Inception Report. 1998:14

<sup>39</sup> GEPAM Inception Report. 1998:14

project's inception report suggested that community members possessed knowledge that might be considered a crucial resource for planning processes. Marginalized groups were indicated as stakeholders in the planning process. However, the difficulty of effectively empowering citizens to participate fully as stakeholders in an initiative constrained by the four year political term was noted.

“Participatory planning approaches generally consume more time than do those of limited participation. Three years can be considered a short time for the project to create the changes necessary in the ways the stakeholders of the project approach the management of the area. A strong leadership from within the municipal organisation has already put in place the participatory decision making structures in a number of sectors and projects under its jurisdiction. It is estimated that this leadership will also be supportive through functionaries of the municipality in assuring that the exchange of information and the participatory processes are also an integral part of the planning process of this project. The community based aspects of GEPAM system as well as of the pilot projects will be designated so as to assure that the benefits associated with the process are visible and real and through this form guarantee continued support and participation from the leaders of the favelas and communities.”<sup>40</sup>

In the inception report, the project goals were stated as follows:

“A sustainable and operational pattern of settlement in watershed protection area and a reduction of risks to families living in degraded and environmentally sensitive areas.”<sup>41</sup>

The inception report indicates that the results of the implementation of the GEPAM approach will be better plans, policies and processes. The objectives also included a strategy to present GEPAM methods; a combined, established process for regular communication and conflict resolution between government and key stakeholders, and greater collaboration and consultation between public and private institutions in Brazil in promoting GEPAM.<sup>42</sup> Activities aimed towards reaching these ends include training in GEPAM methods and the development of a GEPAM planning system. Some planners later mentioned that a more appropriate long-term goal might have been to create a GEPAM system for planning plans, policies, and processes.

“The implementation of the GEPAM system will result in better plans and better planning in the WPA. Better planning, will in its turn, have a long term impact of a better environment and better quality of life for people living in the favelas<sup>43</sup> of the pilot projects and beyond.”<sup>44</sup>

In sum, the initial structure of the project was the design and application of a management approach, rather than the design of a process for developing, implementing and reflecting on adaptive management strategies, or for incorporating change processes into the regular functioning of the organisation. The project was conceptualised as “a political

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<sup>40</sup> GEPAM Inception Report. 1998:21

<sup>41</sup> GEPAM Inception Report. 1998:14

<sup>42</sup> GEPAM Inception Report. 1998.

<sup>43</sup> The term *favela* is used in Brazilian portuguese to denote urban informal settlements where residents do not officially have land tenure. These settlements can be long-standing, or transitory, or a combination of both and can have varying degrees of infrastructure and service-provision, and exist in varying degrees of illegality. See also footnote reference #25 on p. 14 of the thesis for further clarification.

<sup>44</sup> GEPAM Inception Report. 1998:19

compromise that requires new operational tools for environmental management that surpass the traditional master plan.”<sup>45</sup>

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section I present several theories concerning learning and change within organisations. Specifically chosen for their applicability to the case study, they provide context and models to characterize the processes and structures of the PMSA, which relate to their engagement in the GEPAM project. The use of theories from a range of disciplines provides a rich compilation of ideas that assist the reader in building an accurate, full picture of the complex organisation and the processes associated with its movement towards a new management approach. To begin, a definition of organisation and organisational functioning is set out, followed by an explanation of the specific ways in which key terms such as learning are used and connected to theory about organisational learning in this thesis. Other processes are discussed including social learning, involving planned organisational change and decision making in a political context. These are related to the practice of planning, and to the individual planners as agents of change within the organisation.

#### 3.1 ORGANISATION AND LEARNING

##### 3.1.1 ORGANISATION

Organisation can be understood in various ways and each particular understanding of structure and functioning shapes a distinct conception of organisation. Some examples of ways organisations have been understood in organisational learning are reprinted as follows, from Morgan (1996):

1. Organisation as a *machine* – a bureaucratic structure, incorporating interlinked individuals with clearly defined roles to accomplish specific tasks, making up the whole
2. Organisation as a *political system* – a structure determined according to political norms which functions by legitimized agency to affect outcomes
3. Organisation as a *psychic prison* – a system composed of individuals who cannot escape their own beliefs and preoccupations to see a wider picture, and who use their structured interactions to act out and perpetuate these beliefs and preoccupations.
4. Organisation as *instrument of domination* – a hierarchically structured entity that depends on the abilities of few to impose their beliefs on others for its existence, as well as its productive capabilities.
5. Organisation as an *organism* – a unique system of which different types exist like different species, that functions by understanding and administering to the necessities of its parts, or members, in relation to its environment.
6. Organisation as a *brain* – a structure of connections and flows, much like a computer, which functions by processing information into learning and intelligence.
7. Organisation as a *culture* – a socially constructed reality built and sustained by ideas, values, norms, rituals and beliefs.
8. Organisation as *flux and transformation* – a system whose very structure depends on changing perceptions of the logic of change, which shapes actions and social relations within that structure and between the structure and its context.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> GEPAM Inception Report. 1998:5

<sup>46</sup> Morgan, Gareth. *Images of Organisation*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 1997.

In general, the first 4 of these definitions concentrate on power relations as structural elements of the organisation, guiding its functioning. The last 4 place greater emphasis on ways in which knowledge is defined as the central structuring element of the organisation. In this thesis (keeping in mind that any organisation can be understood to exhibit characteristics of all of these models to some degree,) the definition of organisation as a system of flux and transformation is most useful as a model. Following this model, learning shapes perception and contributes to shared understandings between people. In this way, learning is a critical part of the dialectic between actors, as well as between actors and structure, guiding the definition and identity of the organisation. According to some theorists, group identity construction determines how knowledge will be reconstructed or validated.<sup>47</sup> The changing nature of this definition and identity in turn drives change in structure and functioning, as well as results from it.

As a perceptual construct, group identity is thus also relevant to how members use knowledge to understand and guide the organisation and the functioning of processes associated with it. This in turn, can foster or impede change or maintenance. Knowledge existing and built among members of the organisation contributes to a network of shared experiences and understandings, symbolically melding the organisation over time. Eventually they become viewed as extra-individual objective aspects of the organisation. This extra-individual framework of understanding and norms effectively guides how new experiences will be understood and transformed into knowledge within the structure of the organisation.<sup>48</sup> Depending on the nature of this framework, change or maintenance can be promoted. In this way, the organisation, (which includes the actors knowledge and learning processes as well as actions,) can be understood as a cultural artefact. This artefact cannot exist in individual minds, but must always be as a result of the interaction between people, knowledge and their actions, and is closely related to processes of socialization and learning.<sup>49</sup>

To understand processes of organisational identity building and maintenance, some researchers suggest empirical research through narrative and linguistic methods is useful. This involves discourse analysis of everything from examination of the choices of words to practices of communication occurring in an organisation.<sup>50</sup> Discourse in the context of this thesis is defined as the processes whereby actors, according to their individual roles within the organisation, and in their relationships to one another and to various structures, interact with each other and with the processes and structures of the organisation, guiding and constraining the identity, structure and actions of the organisation.

This thesis uses a systems perspective to describe the PMSA institution as it is composed of the roles, structures, and processes associated with planning at the municipal level. The systems perspective permits the deconstruction of various elements of organisation while still highlighting their connectivity. This approach facilitates understanding of GEPAM's role as an external input contributing to learning as leverage for change at various levels of the organisation. The PMSA is a public organisation made up of individuals with varying technical skills and abilities, political outlooks, and career experiences, playing a range of roles and engaging in numerous distinct or interconnected processes within a multiplicity of frameworks – formal, administrative, legal and otherwise (social, political, etc.) The specific and complete details of the makeup and functioning of the institution are extremely complex and not entirely relevant to this thesis.

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<sup>47</sup> Nicoli and Mezmar (1995:740-741) in Easterby-Smith and Araujo, 2001:20

<sup>48</sup> Nicoli and Mezmar (1995:740-741) in Easterby-Smith and Araujo, 2001:20

<sup>49</sup> Easterby-Smith and Araujo, 2001:21

<sup>50</sup> Easterby-Smith and Araujo, 2001:23

The use of a systems perspective clarifies structures and processes, helping to provide a general idea of the interconnectedness between various aspects and change over time, a model that allows a focus on particular specific aspects of interest. As suggested by Beer, an organisation can be conceptualised as a system in that it is an entity composed of parts interacting with one another and their environment.<sup>51</sup> These parts include people, structures, processes, and cultures. The boundaries of the system are permeated by in and outflows of energy, matter and information to a larger environmental context. These flows include everything from ideas or knowledge to financing or public works. An organisation as a system functions as a network that transforms raw materials into outputs (ideas to practices, cash to infrastructure, etc.). Importantly, some of the structures and processes within the system function as feedback mechanisms, transforming the relationships between parts, adjusting or responding to flows, incorporating new inputs or discarding outputs in order either to help the system maintain stability (through negative feedback, where every deviation from the norm promotes a reaction within the system to pull back towards the norm) or to deviate towards change (through positive feedback, where deviations are amplified by the reaction of the system towards change). Finally, a system continually moves towards a greater state of entropy, which is counteracted only by the continuous input and transformation of energy to useful matter.

As an external input to the PMSA system, GEPAM affected the functioning and existence of certain feedback mechanisms and by extension, promoted or inhibited learning as leverage for change in the organisation. The external input of GEPAM affects not only the functioning of the system, and by extension its position relative to its desired future, but also the definition and location of said desired future state. This thesis examines the learning processes associated with these changes within both of these contexts.

The GEPAM project is an external input to the PMSA system mediated and directed by actors interacting with one another within and across various structures and processes, contributing to outputs of new knowledge, maintenance or change in the individuals, relations and structures of the organisation, effectively pushing it towards a particular future. Understanding the learning processes and outcomes associated with GEPAM and their ability to contribute to positive change is useful to future project design considerations. To better understand how the relationships of the various parts making up the organisation of the PMSA function, interact and change over time, especially with regard to the external input of GEPAM, it is worthwhile to examine learning and knowledge acquisition processes as they relate to action at the various levels of the system.

### *3.1.2 LEARNING*

Learning is defined in this thesis as a conscious process, by which individuals gain knowledge and reflect upon it, having an awareness to some extent of the parts making up the whole, as well as the position of the whole within a larger whole.

“Learning is a process that involves conscious knowledge gained through teaching (though not necessarily from someone officially designated a teacher) or through certain life experiences that trigger conscious reflection. This teaching or reflection involves explanation and analysis, that is, breaking down the thing to be learned into its analytic parts. It inherently

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<sup>51</sup> Beer, Michael. “A Social Systems Model for Organization Development” in Systems Theory for Organization Development. Cummings, Thomas G. ed. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 1980.

involves attaining, along with the matter being taught, some degree of meta knowledge about the matter.”<sup>52</sup>

Acquisition is here defined as bearing more similarities to a process of gaining knowledge or practice through trial and error, a sub-conscious, or non-conscious type of learning.

“Acquisition is a process of acquiring something subconsciously by exposure to models, a process of trial and error, and practice within social groups, without formal teaching. It happens in natural settings that are meaningful and functional in the sense that acquirers know that they need to acquire the thing they are exposed to in order to function and that they in fact want to so function. This is how most people come to control their first language.”<sup>53</sup>

Learning and acquisition are processes continually occurring among individuals in all aspects of their everyday lives, from personal relationships to professional contexts. They happen, for better or worse, as a result of all action and interaction that people engage in. Their effectiveness in serving the purposes of a particular user, in being retained and applied effectively to future situations is in many cases less than sure. Further, the two processes have different strengths. Knowledge gained through acquisition is generally easier for people to apply in practical settings, often without even realizing that they are doing so, while learning helps people to understand at a meta-level, which is useful for conscious reflection resulting in adjustment of practices to suit particular purposes. Note here that acquirers, though aware of their needs for effective functioning, may not be aware of their needs for specific knowledges. Acquired practices, by nature, do not always result from a perceived necessity of a specific learning, but more often from a perception of a particular desired outcome. This is an important distinction between acquisition and learning which affects the ability of particular knowledges to be incorporated into practices. It appears that unconsciously acquired practices are much easier to replicate and move fairly easily to become entrenched practices, while consciously learned things are more difficult to incorporate into practice, especially at lower levels of a political hierarchy.

“Acquisition is good for performance, learning is good for meta-level knowledge. Acquisition and learning are this, too, differential sources of power: acquirers usually beat learners at performance, whereas learners usually beat acquirers at talking about it – that is, at explication, explanation, analysis, and criticism.”<sup>54</sup>

This thesis seeks to provide evidence and explanation for new knowledge and its effective retention and institutionalization by learning and acquisition processes occurring in the PMSA through the GEPAM project. As complementary social processes, learning and knowledge acquisition are two basic factors in continuity and change at various levels of the organisation. Understanding the processes and how they might be shaped to more effectively and efficiently serve the purposes of an individual or an organisation is the objective of organisational learning, a process made up of learning, acquisition, and planned change. This thesis also examines the relationship of other factors on the effectiveness of learning processes leading to change and transformation in the organisation. As previously mentioned, in the context of organisation, it is often easier for a daily practice to change by acquisition, while structures and functioning of formal aspects of the organisation are more resistant to change as they require overt explanation,

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<sup>52</sup> Gee, James Paul. The Social Mind: language, ideology and social practice. New York: Bergin and Garvey, 1992. 113

<sup>53</sup> Gee, 1992:113

<sup>54</sup> Gee, 1992:115

conscious learning and political decision making power to be enacted. In light of this, it is important to consider the role that political discourse plays in organisational identity, continuity and change. Discourse may, at times, act as a bridge between acquisition and learning.

“Discourses are mastered through acquisition, not learning.... discourses are not mastered by overt instruction...but by enculturation...into social practices through scaffolded and supported interaction with people who have already mastered the discourse. ...as a discourse is being mastered by acquisition, then of course, learning can facilitate “meta knowledge” but learning can facilitate nothing unless the acquisition process has already begun.”<sup>55</sup>

Learning and acquisition processes are the pathways across which the discourse of the organisation occurs. Through them, identity is created, structures of relationships are defined and processes are created, maintained or changed. These processes occur at the individual level, in relations between people, and in the structure of the organisation itself.

In the case study presented in this thesis, a substantial amount of the learning spoken of by interviewees occurred at the individual level as a process of acquisition. This was sometimes transferred, through formal or informal organisational discourse to formally institutionalized learning at higher levels of the organisation. A similar process occurred in the other direction, where learning institutionalized at the structural level facilitated or impeded acquisition at the levels of relationships or individual practices.

Learning and acquisition occur in all interactions between individuals, relations and structures within an organisation. Notably, acquisition is more evident in the portion of the spectrum related to individual learning and knowledge development, while learning is more evident in the portion of the spectrum related to institutional structure and knowledge retention. Apparently, learning is much easier to formally distribute, retain, and institutionalize when actors promote it with substantial political power within the organisation. Conversely, changes in specific practices and exchanges between individuals occur much more easily through acquisition processes because they are not forced to follow rigidly set paths and are less restricted by hierarchical structure of decision making. Here it is important to note the unpredictability of what can and will be acquired and the reliance on political decision-making power for what will be ‘learned’ and institutionalized. Decision making structures also influence what is acquired, where acquisition seeks to facilitate and cope with restrictive structures.

The differential capacities for institutionalization of learning vs. acquisition is relevant to the PMSA’s ability to incorporate learning from the GEPAM project into the organisation. Also, as demonstrated in the analysis, structural learning in terms of the use of a new framework for management, or a new forum for planner community interaction is much easier to formally institutionalize than is, for example, a new way of dealing with a particular issue, acquired by a planner over the course of their practical experience.

### *3.1.3 ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING*

Organisational learning (OL) is here defined as all conscious reflection and associated deliberate action within an organisation related to the activities of learning, knowledge acquisition and planned change carried out by individuals in their daily practices, occurring and exhibited through relationships, and manifest in the structures and processes of an organisation.

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<sup>55</sup> Gee, 1992:114-155



Essentially it is explicit recognition of and conscious attempts to shape and organise the discourse of an organisation for particular purposes, usually involving perceived improvements in organisational effectiveness and efficiency at meeting particular goals. These goals carry with them a set of value assumptions. Many theorists and practitioners in the field of organisational learning stress the importance of normative processes within an organisation, suggesting they are both possible to define, and indicative of the presence and character of greater capacity for learning.<sup>56</sup> Araujo and Easterby-Smith, in their examination of current theory and practice in the field of organisational learning, suggest that the processes as characterized by theorists/practitioners, usually fall into one of two larger visions, or 'panaceas' of OL, the *technical* or the *social*.<sup>57</sup>

Learning as a technical process involves the collection, processing, interpretation, and response to information. According to a technical vision, learning processes are linear and discrete, occurring in hierarchically arranged stages. There is an assumption that these stages are conceptually distinct levels - that specific processes can be classified objectively and hierarchically with higher level learning indicating greater change capacity. The technical view relates to a choice model of rational instrumentalism, whereby individuals seek out and use the best information possible to make informed decisions.<sup>58</sup> By this perspective, problems in systems emerge when "rational" paths of action are not followed, or when politics take precedence over informed technically sound action - a difficulty impossible to surmount if one recognizes that humans do not act as objective beings.<sup>59</sup> Easterby-Smith and Araujo note that this model sometimes neglects to distinguish whether change is reflective of learning or not. This omission results in difficulties in identifying the nature of learning processes occurring in a particular system and whether they address the roots of problems or are simply reactionary responses to symptoms (double vs. single loop learning).

Conversely, according to a social vision, organizational learning involves the ways in which people attach significance (emerging from explicit or tacit sources) to their work experiences. In this conception, facts have no significance beyond the importance, which people attach to them.<sup>60</sup> Learning processes are cyclical and occur in a continuous series of stages, defined by information management, interpretation and action. According to this model, people learn through their immersion in a culture, by emulating others, etc. Much critical organisational knowledge doesn't exist on paper, or even in the minds of individuals, but only in the community as a whole. Learning is the expansion of this field of understanding to include new people, as well as the incorporation of new practices and ways of being.<sup>61</sup> This mode assumes interrelation between processes of the organisation. It also asserts the impossibility of separating these processes or understandings into distinct units or of isolating them from each other or their context. The existence and conception of learning processes depends on the subjective management and interpretation of information, and the development and structuring of actions in relation to one another is based in interpretation through process, which may not result in hierarchical classification, or qualification of one kind or aspect of learning as better than another.<sup>62</sup> This understanding of learning is closely related to the process of acquisition earlier discussed.

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<sup>56</sup> Easterby-Smith and Araujo, 2001:25

<sup>57</sup> Note that there can be notable crossovers where technical processes use social criteria, or social processes technical.

<sup>58</sup> See Legge (1984) for an explanation of this model.

<sup>59</sup> Easterby-Smith and Araujo, 2001:18

<sup>60</sup> Easterby-Smith and Araujo, 2001:19

<sup>61</sup> Easterby-Smith and Araujo, 2001:20

<sup>62</sup> Easterby-Smith and Araujo, 2001:26

These visions have also been described as 'modular' and 'collective'.<sup>63</sup> The modular view considers learning as an individual process, involving acquisition, new members and change, while the collective view also incorporates the learning and knowledge contained in routines, hierarchical structures, and the shaping perceptual forces of culture or definitions of knowledge, etc.<sup>64</sup> These two main bodies of theory can also be separated into the study of organisational learning as a process occurring within an organisational context, or the study of organisations making conscious attention to learning processes in attempts to achieve certain structural and functional goals. Necessarily, some crossover exists between the two distinct fields and most systems can be understood using both sets of concepts to some degree. In this thesis, the technical modular view fits most appropriately the micro-level change processes, while the social collective view of learning processes of an organisation as a living system matches well a more holistic consideration of the various motivations for action and change in the organisation.

Organisational learning is linked with changes in skills, in understandings, in rules, and in structures.<sup>65</sup> Coriat and Dosi suggest that organisational learning and knowledge are 'emergent properties' of a system involving interaction between the system's parts and between the system and the environment. They also note that organisational learning is linked with changes in practice that don't necessarily reflect 'knowledge'. The institution of knowledge involves codification of knowledge and interaction. Organisational learning is not only cognitive, but also social adaptation and modeling of rules.<sup>66</sup> Action in the form of organisational innovation or planned change can occur as a result of internal learning processes or through the acquisition of external competencies and new or modified organisational models.<sup>67</sup> Change is very difficult to quantify because it can occur anywhere "experimentation and adjustments are diffused throughout the organisation."<sup>68</sup> Also, more decentralised learning doesn't necessarily mean more learning overall, especially if it doesn't make sense with the overall context.<sup>69</sup>

While theorists may be divided in the ways they understand the functioning of learning processes in an organisational system, they generally agree that there are many difficulties in implementing a concept of organisational learning in a practical sense, whatever the model used.<sup>70</sup> Among the diverse approaches that exist, two of the most well known, which also serve to highlight the distinction between the two conceptual schools of thought, can be found in the consultative approaches of two organisational learning practitioners, Chris Argyris, whose conceptualisation of learning processes could be described as technical, focusing on prescriptive, linear learning,<sup>71</sup> and Michel Crozier, whose empathetic social learning model stresses the importance of understanding ways in which people structure knowledge and learning to make meaning at a personal level and as collective values or norms within the wider organisation.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Coriat, Benjamin and Dosi, Giovanni. "The Nature and Accumulation of Organisational Competencies/Capabilities." In *Revista Brasileira de Inovacao*. 1:2 Jul/Dec 2002. 275-315. 300-301.

<sup>64</sup> This collective view is also supported by Fetterman (2000), and Morgan (1997).

<sup>65</sup> Narduzzo et al. 2000 in Coriat and Dosi, 2002 p.301

<sup>66</sup> Coriat and Dosi, 2002:303

<sup>67</sup> Coriat and Dosi, 2002:303

<sup>68</sup> Coriat and Dosi, 2002:303

<sup>69</sup> Coriat and Dosi, 2002:304

<sup>70</sup> Easterby-Smith and Araujo, 2001:26

<sup>71</sup> See Argyris (1957, 1962, 1964, 1982, 1985, 1990) as well as Argyris and Schön (1974, 1978, 1996).

<sup>72</sup> See Crozier (1963, 1970, 1989, 1995).

Models of organisation and of learning are conceptual. Real world distinctions are less clear. Examples of aspects of both definitions often co-exist in the same organisation, depending on the perceptions and actions of members of the organisation, as well as the structures in which they interact. In this thesis, organisational learning processes as described by the interviewees are best explained using a combination of technical and social models. For instance, while learning processes are often described by planners as involving technical single or double loop reflection, the ways in which they place value on this process of reflection, or how they define and characterize the substance of the learning itself are strongly affected by their social understandings, personal and group values and politics, as well as by how they understand and value learning socially.

### 3.1.4 SOCIAL LEARNING

Approaches for understanding learning processes in an organisational context include social (learning together), cognitive (learning by doing) and pragmatic (learning from practice through reflection and review).<sup>73</sup> Planning as *social learning*<sup>74</sup> involves a rejection of conventional top-down, prescriptive planning in favour of 'mutual learning' occurring through a "transactive" process of dialogue.<sup>75</sup> Friedmann (1987) suggests that social learning draws on Dewey's and Mumford's pragmatic, experiential cognitive visions of 'learning by doing' where an ideal planning situation is one where an empowered community makes decisions.<sup>76</sup> Understanding who is promoting or explicitly instigating learning processes and for what purposes is increasingly relevant when government organisations acting in the public domain engage in processes that involve direct collaboration with citizens. Participation can in some situations serve to reinforce the power of the state, while in other ways, may be used to challenge it.

Friedmann's definition of *social learning* involves a process of practice-based learning that combines personal knowledge (often tacit, or acquired) with processed (or formally learned) knowledge. This occurs through a process of mutual learning where people with different backgrounds and technical skills engage in dialogue and group reflection as collaborative problem solving.<sup>77</sup> Learning this way from each other through dialogue necessitates trust between two or more people, and works best in small groups. From this type of problem based collaborative approach people emerge with transformed cognitive maps.<sup>78</sup> Friedmann (1987) suggests that status differences resulting from the command of different kinds of knowledge must be minimized and that social learning is a 'model of politicized learning' because engaging in it involves a value commitment and associated risk.<sup>79</sup> In the context of organisational learning, it may be politically unreasonable or impossible to minimize status differences in the structure of the organisation, even where the organisation seeks consciously to do so. In these instances, a sort of constrained social learning might be possible, facilitated by making explicit how relationships between groups and individuals are understood, and organised both formally and informally. Social learning processes face risks of failure if they fall short in the establishment of deep trust between members, or if equal and collaborative relationships between members do not exist. This

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<sup>73</sup> Friedmann, John. Planning in the Public Domain: From Knowledge to Action. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987.

<sup>74</sup> Friedmann, 1987:181-224

<sup>75</sup> See also Friedmann (1973) where transactive planning is discussed in greater detail.

<sup>76</sup> Friedmann, 1987:187

<sup>77</sup> Friedmann, 1987:192-193

<sup>78</sup> Friedmann, 1987:192-193. A cognitive map involves the ways in which people understand processes of understanding or knowing. It is essentially the pathways through which they link the parts forming an understanding of a process or phenomenon.

<sup>79</sup> Friedmann, 1987:194.

is especially relevant in a public organisation with a strong hierarchical structure such as the PMSA, or between this organisation with its formal institutional power and a group without formal power, such as the community members without formal land tenure rights living in Santo André's Watershed Protection Area.

### 3.1.5 PLANNED CHANGE IN ORGANISATIONS

Organisational systems are enabled and constrained in their application of social learning processes, according to the ways in which it is possible and likely for planned change to happen. Planned change occurs through a process of decision making within the political structure of the organisation. In a study of planned organisational change, Legge (1984) provides a rich discussion and overview of planning theories about prescriptive and descriptive models of change in organisations. As this thesis attempts to characterize learning in relation to a set of planned change processes developed and implemented through the GEPAM project, a brief examination of some of the principle ideas Legge presents is useful here, to characterize why and how organisational thought and discourse about planned change resulting from learning may differ from real action and reflection about learning taking place in the organisation.

To begin, Legge states that change, as 'becoming different', while at first appearing to be a simple concept, actually presents a duality of meanings depending on whether one ascribes primary value to the *process of becoming* different, or the *achievement of the state* of difference.<sup>80</sup> In either case, planned change is generally utilitarian and serves a functional purpose. In understanding a planned change process, the definition of difference is important, whether a subjective or objective conception of reality is used (i.e. change can exist through a reconceptualization of an issue vs. change must be demonstrated by a difference in state or action). According to Legge, definitions of the purposes change serves (process or state) shape the ways in which actors engage in these processes as well as how they perceive their effectiveness.

"Constraints and opportunities will arise from the way those involved actually plan, design and implement change, and, consequently, from the normative and descriptive models they explicitly or implicitly hold about the 'proper' and 'real' nature of these processes."<sup>81</sup>

Drawing on a number of theorists' work, Legge demonstrates the common focus of analysis and action in organisational change, involving the tasks, technologies, and structures that shape the roles and behaviours of the members of the organisation.<sup>82</sup> She discusses two general categories of models for understanding change: the normative, which she suggests is generally oriented towards achieving a desired state, or the descriptive, which is more concerned with explanation of how planning actually happens, and from this often contributes to the development of normative models. Both normative and descriptive models generally involve three important aspects: planning change, change strategies and desired outcomes or effectiveness.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Legge, Karen. *Evaluating Planned Organizational Change*. Academic Press: London, 1984: 15-16. This relates very closely to the two dominant schools of organisational learning thought where learning and change are thought of as subjective interrelated social or objective linear technical processes

<sup>81</sup> Legge, 1984: 15-16

<sup>82</sup> Katz and Kahn, 1966; Leavitt, 1964; and Perrow, 1970 in Legge, 1984:17

<sup>83</sup> Legge, 1984:18

Legge draws on Leavitt (1964) to describe organisational functioning as a multi-level, mutable system made up of four key interdependent aspects that can act as leverage points for change: tasks, structures, technologies, and people, where planned change in any one area will result in 'retaliatory' change in another, unless one also anticipates and plans for this occurrence.<sup>84</sup> Normative change strategies generally involve issues of leverage points, mode and tactics. The mode or approach in normative models can be participative or authoritative, and can involve unilateral action, power sharing or delegated authority.<sup>85</sup> The tactics, or iterative steps in a process generally involve identification of the problem, gathering data, and diagnosis, setting objectives, implementing, reviewing and repeating.<sup>86</sup> Some examples of normative models for planning change are the 'rational comprehensive'<sup>87</sup> (which Legge calls unrealistic due to the real world uncertainty of objectives, consequences), 'bounded rationality',<sup>88</sup> 'disjointed incrementalism',<sup>89</sup> and Etzioni's (1973) 'mixed scanning'.<sup>90</sup> Legge does not imply that the model should involve reflection on the change process.

Some of the interviewees for this thesis suggested that within the range of their authority they use a rational comprehensive model for decision making. Others suggested they rely more on processes that can best be described as bounded rationality or mixed scanning. It is likely that all decision makers use a combination of models, especially when faced with unanticipated factors and consequences. Generally, higher-level decisions within the PMSA are made authoritatively. The delegation of responsibilities and the use of more participatory models have a higher incidence as the perceived importance of the decision, or its ability to significantly affect the functioning of the larger system, decreases. For example, decisions to implement a particular activity may be made unilaterally at the top level of a department, while power may be shared among various departments, or sub-departments in deciding the implementation schedule and assigning responsibilities for specific tasks. These tasks themselves may be defined by a participatory group that also suggests ideas for modifications to the activity. While participatory processes are common at lower levels, their decisions still rest on approval by an authoritative body. These authoritative bodies are therefore primarily responsible for defining and upholding the movement of the organisation towards its desired future state.

According to Legge, descriptive models of change often make the connection between what Argyris and Schön (1974) call "espoused theories" and "theories in use."<sup>91</sup> Espoused theories are those which people suggest, (and sometimes believe) they use to do everything from ascribing value to different kinds of knowledge, to making decisions, or dealing with unforeseen

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<sup>84</sup> Legge, 1984: 23

<sup>85</sup> Greiner (1967), in Legge, 1984: 26

<sup>86</sup> Legge, 1984: 26

<sup>87</sup> By this theory choices and decisions about goals and objectives and actions are undertaken in situations assumed to be rational, by deliberate orderly action (Simon, 1954; Cyert and March, 1963 in Legge, 1984: 20)

<sup>88</sup> This theory involves satisficing and the construction of simplified models of reality to undertake localized problem solving, deal with immediate problems, seek close solutions and review procedures)<sup>88</sup>,

<sup>89</sup> where limited information and comparisons are used, without clear objectives to make choices based on marginal improvements, generally to move away from problems rather than towards goals, Legge, 1984: 20. Legge also notes that while this model is often accepted as a description of how change processes happen, it is rejected by many, particularly Etzioni (1968) as a normative prescriptive model for change, because they suggest that the conservatism it implies will mean that planning decisions will reflect the interests of the most powerful in an organisation.

<sup>90</sup> where both a broad picture view, and a focus on specific areas of interest are used to collect information, allocate resources according to goals and cost-benefit analysis.

<sup>91</sup> Legge, 1984: 29

problems at work. Theories in use are the ways in which people's actual behaviour follows certain patterns, according to their implicit understanding of actions and likely consequences. Theories in use depend on the values held by an actor, and the motivations for a particular action. While rational choice, bounded rationality and mixed scanning models are useful generalizations, they are not complete because they do not account for factors such as political context, strategic manoeuvring of individuals, varying motivations and understandings of complex situations, or the possibility of non-linearity in processes of decision making and change. A useful addition to this range of theory suggested by Legge can be found in Cohen et al.'s 1976 'garbage can' model of decision-making. By this model decision-making processes compete as priorities within a range of other activities such as fulfilling commitments, justifying past actions, socializing, etc. According to this model, a 'choice situation' is more than simply an opportunity for problem solving, it is also "a meeting place for issues and feelings looking for decision situations in which they may be aired, solutions looking for issues to which they may be an answer, and participants looking for problems or pleasure."<sup>92</sup> This is highly relevant when examining the functioning of decision-making processes in the PMSA, so as not to make assumptions about purpose and by extension, reasons for the success or failure of various initiatives.

Descriptive models of change depend on the conceptualization of change as either a 'distinguishable behaviour that may be characterized (e.g. evolutionary vs. revolutionary) and about which theories of causation may be developed', or 'an integral part of an organisation's adaptive behaviour and theories of change' – an everyday action.<sup>93</sup> Legge suggests that in this, a systems perspective of change is useful as it helps to identify distinct variables and presents change in a form that people can effectively react and adapt to and make meaning from. This involves problem recognition, where the identification of a performance gap, if large and pervasive, can effectively lead to radical innovation and double loop learning. By this logic, according to Legge, organisations that have difficulty measuring their outputs, or that measure them infrequently, or have low standards, often end up in situations of larger performance gap, recognized as crisis, which makes them more likely to engage in radical innovation. In the context of a project such as GEPAM, a perceived crisis in management could promote a stronger desire within the organisation to engage in change processes. This desire, being inversely related to the level of perceived organisational effectiveness, would decrease as they came to acquire some skills and practices. Therefore, difficulty could be experienced in overcoming a middle ground of moderate organisation, as the actors would lack the motivation to push them towards change. By Legge's vision the systems perspective involves initiation processes, requiring the search for and acquisition of resources, often from outside the organisation.

Finally, Legge views the routinization of change as an issue especially in situations where it is difficult to measure change. The time span allowed for the demonstration of results affects the perception of results in this also,

"Non-measurability reduces the visibility of benefits, which may reduce the likelihood of an innovation being accepted and then institutionalized."<sup>94</sup>

Considering this in relation to the definitions of learning and acquisition earlier set out provides us with an explanation of why acquired knowledge is more difficult to formally institutionalize. Acquisition, because it is informal, is difficult to measure and to incorporate into an official routine, and therefore difficult to retain in the face of other changes to organisational structure,

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<sup>92</sup> Cohen et al., (1976:25), in Legge, 1984:30

<sup>93</sup> Legge, 1984: 33

<sup>94</sup> Legge, 1984: 41

relations, or actors. Importantly this also makes it difficult to prevent or change, though it may in fact be detrimental or contrary to the objectives of the organisation. Attempts to raise consciousness of acquired practices, so that they might be examined and evaluated for their contributions towards a desired future state, and efforts to formalise them where appropriate into official learning are thus valuable endeavours in the process of planned organisational change.

According to Legge, most actors intuitively make their own decisions about the success or non-success of change processes according to meeting particular goals, and this is a political process.<sup>95</sup> In practical assessment of the effectiveness of change, Legge argues it is difficult to use goal attainment as monitoring criteria, because goals are often so vague, and specific operative goals within an organisation are often in conflict or competing. The appropriateness or continued value of particular goals can also be questioned. The whole process of change involves evaluations based on assumptions about the value of particular goals and processes.<sup>96</sup> When goal setting and changes in practice are directed by an authoritative body, it can be difficult for other levels of the organisation to challenge their value openly, presenting a significant constraint on the effective functioning of the learning system, as it essentially has no checks or balances on its own activity. This is particularly relevant to that portion of analysis in this thesis where goals and motives for the PMSA to become a learning system are discussed.

### 3.1.5.1 POLITICAL STRUCTURES FOR DECISION MAKING

Organisational learning has important political aspects and implications. Politics here means all processes whereby social actors are involved in negotiation or decision making towards valued purposes. The possibilities for understanding and implementing learning structures and processes are shaped by the existing structures of power and how they are understood, both within an organisation, as well as between the organisation and society. Several theorists have in the past, disputed this.

Some theorists and practitioners, generally those ascribing to the technical visions of organisational learning, see the political realm as detrimental to the objectives of learning - an obstacle whose removal would make effective learning easier to achieve. As highlighted in the work of Argyris and Schön (1978) a political activity within the realm of intra-organisational dynamics would involve something like the expression of defensive behaviours, and their ability to block capacity for acknowledgement of issues, and by extension, learning, depending on the position within the organisation of the actor exhibiting the behaviour. According to Senge (1990), the sheer existence of political activity is a restriction to the establishment of the learning organisation and attempts to divorce organisational activity from politics are necessary.<sup>97</sup> It is virtually impossible however, to truly disassociate politics from other activities of an organisation, much less from the activities of an individual actor with a particular role and relationships within the structure of that organisation. Models purporting to explain learning and change processes free of politics, or describing politics as a fettering externality, are simply not realistic. In the case study presented in this thesis, the 'organisation' is a public institution run by a democratically elected political party. The PMSA carries a clearly political mandate, not to mention the multiple separate micro-political mandates of all of the individual actors within the organisation. As such, a theory of organisational learning that neglects the shaping forces of political aspects of the organisation is inappropriate.

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<sup>95</sup> Legge, 1984: 46

<sup>96</sup> Legge, 1984: 46

<sup>97</sup> Easterby-Smith and Araujo, 2001:20.

For understanding learning processes in the specific situation of the PMSA, the incorporation of social and political considerations is necessary. From a social perspective, politics is viewed as a natural part of life, central to the creation of meaning within the organisation. According to this perspective it cannot nor should not be eliminated.<sup>98</sup> Understanding is shaped partly by norms within the organisation, partly by power relations, where power holders control access to information according to their perceived needs and purposes.

“The interpretative process within organisations is directly mediated by power relations... Departments, functional groups, and project teams consciously organise themselves to present information internally and externally, as a means of serving their purposes.”<sup>99</sup>

The information presented, and the format in which it is made available and to who it is available are thus manifestations of organisational politics which guide understanding and action in the organisation. Careful attention is necessary to know how this activity affects the organisation and the effectiveness of learning processes towards particular goals.

In general, theorists supporting social views of organisational learning argue for the necessity of factoring in the political context to organisational learning processes. This is well illustrated in the following two theoretical examples, both drawn from the managerial sciences. The examples connect technical models of organisation with underlying social considerations. Note that although the politics present in private organisations are not qualitatively the same as those concerning public organisations, the ways in which they affect bureaucratic practices such as policy, change, and routinization are often similar. The first example is a social model of ‘reflective learning’ developed by Brockbank McGill and Beech (2002) in their prescriptive guide for better organisational management. The second is Mangham’s (1979) argument for understanding models of organisation as they are affected by micro-political processes between individuals.

Brockbank, McGill and Beech highlight three levels of learning and improvement as: personal reflections, corrections of practice, and transformation. They suggest that a strategic reconsideration of the nature of work in organisations. This involves questioning patterns and innovative practices, and highlighting learning about learning, or a meta-level understanding of the learning processes.<sup>100</sup> Drawing on the work of Argyris and Schön (1974), they suggest learning within an organisation can happen at an instrumental level of single loop (test, experience, reflect, generalize), or at a deeper level of double loop, (recognizing uncertainty in the socio-political context), where a paradigm shift leads to emergent knowledge and new understanding to be applied to solving problems at the instrumental level.<sup>101</sup> Similar to the social learning model, this model of ‘reflective learning’ is “a process which involves dialogue with others for improvement or transformation whilst recognizing the emotional, social, and political context of the learner.”<sup>102</sup> The authors argue that because organisational learning is never neutral, making explicit the social context and structure of an organisation and the power relations within

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<sup>98</sup> Coopey, J. “The learning organization: power, politics and ideology.” *Management Learning*, 26 (2), 1995. 193-214.

<sup>99</sup> Easterby-Smith and Araujo, 2001:21.

<sup>100</sup> Brockbank, Anne, McGill, Ian and Nic Beech. “Our Purpose” in *Reflective Learning in Practice*. Brockbank, McGill and Beech, Eds. Gower Publishing Co., Burlington, 2002. 10

<sup>101</sup> Brockbank, McGill and Beech, 2002:10

<sup>102</sup> Brockbank, McGill and Beech, 2002:10



it are vital to learning, in a deep holistic sense, and to the ability to use the outcomes of that learning towards change, or transformation.<sup>103</sup>

Iain Mangham (1979) similarly stresses the value of recognising political aspects of organisation. He suggests there are three main theories of organisation, (the classical machine theory, the human relations social theory, and the cybernetics systems theory), which are limited in their ability to describe real behaviour because they do not take into account the human ability to choose how and when to follow rules, set objectives, or manipulate one's own behaviour. He argues that because humans have an ability and a penchant for strategic thinking, it is necessary to take a perspective of group alliances and strategic actors in the political makeup of an organisation, where action is the outcome of struggles of interaction between members.

"all behaviour at all levels and in all circumstances may be regarded as political – the determination of who gets what – and in this respect organisation is no more than a continuation of the struggle in another form."<sup>104</sup>

Making the political aspects of organisation and organisational learning processes more explicit can help actors and groups better understand underlying motivations, and may guide them towards change processes that are more effective in meeting their real needs. Without a recognition of political motivations and values, it is difficult to know why information is valued and by extension, its relevance to learning, continuity and change within the organisation.

### 3.1.5.2 POLITICAL DECISION MAKING MODELS

Understanding learning that occurs as a social process in an organisational context requires a recognition of the political aspects of organisation and of learning, ideas about how actors attempt change and descriptions of how change actually happens, whether intentional or not. A deeper examination of the political context of consciously planned change through decision making in the organisation facilitates a better understanding of the constraints on and opportunities for the effective exercise of organisational learning processes. An organisational structure might be viewed in several ways. In this thesis it is examined as the framework across which decisions are made and processes implemented. According to its design, it is an enabling or constraining factor on individual actors abilities to affect change, especially in the formulation of the framework itself.

A structural framework for decision-making is the arena in which power is exercised - an essential component of political process in an organisation as described by Huff (1980). According to Huff, politics incorporates not only "the direct study of power"(using Dahl's definition of power as the ability to affect valued outcomes), but also "encompasses the setting within which power is exercised." In her political typology of organizational development models, Huff focuses on the mediation of conflicts through various leverage points in a decision making structure as the primary mode for the achievement of change or continuity.<sup>105</sup> Depending on the model in place, or understood to be in place, actors will move differently, and face different challenges and opportunities when attempting to make change in organisational structures or policies. It is also possible for several models to co-exist or overlap in varying

<sup>103</sup> Brockbank, McGill and Beech, 2002:4

<sup>104</sup> Mangham, Iain. *The Politics of Organisational Change*. Associated Business Press, London, 1979.

<sup>105</sup> Huff, Anne Sigismund. "Organizations as Political Systems: Implications for Diagnosis, Change and Stability" in *Systems Theory for Organization Development*. Cummings, Thomas G. ed. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 1980.164

degrees both formally and informally, depending on the particular issue or aspect of the organisation in question.

Huff's five models (structural, group, elites, incremental/bureaucratic, and systems/resources) are distinguished by their varying conceptions of the primary source of power and what is reflected by formal decisions. A structural model is characterized by a hierarchical structure in which subunits exercising distinct jurisdictions create slightly overlapping policies checking and balancing each other while addressing external conditions. In this model there exists an overarching policy direction. Subunits are prevented from significant deviation unless they can significantly increase their jurisdiction or alter the relationships of the structure.<sup>106</sup> Changes in practice resulting from learning are constrained by the necessity of agreeing with the general policy direction, making double loop learning initiating change a difficult process unless it occurs at a high level of the hierarchy. For significant change in practice or understanding to occur within the organisation in response to external conditions experienced at a lower level of the hierarchy, knowledge must effectively travel through various levels of the hierarchy and not be stymied or warped by political constraints such as efforts to maintain institutional continuity along the way. This model is somewhat unrealistic as it does not leave room for informal knowledge communication, for deviation from higher-level policy, which may happen in practice at lower levels, or for effective adaptation to occur at lower levels of the hierarchy without significantly affecting the relationships between departments, as well as between levels. At best, an organisation suggesting that this is how their decision making processes happen, is engaging in an 'espoused theory'.

The next two models, the group and elites, place a stronger emphasis on informal power structures present in organisations. According to the group model, individuals make up interest groups and coalitions, internal and external to the organization, exerting pressure in the form of demands. They have varying leverage and competition, which balances their influence on management decisions. Change occurs through the coordination of group interests, achieving greater leverage in the form of consolidated demands. Stability is promoted when groups maintain distinct identities and closer contact with the organisation than with each other. According to the elites model, decisions are generally made, often informally, by a small group of individuals possessing great power, who interact with other middle elites to negotiate influence over management. Change in this system is achieved when access to formal decision makers changes. While the contribution of these two models to understanding the functioning of an organisational system is important, their neglect of the formal structures present in the organisation presents a limited view.

Huff's last two models place a strong focus on the ways in which external pressures are understood by organisations and can push them towards change. The incremental/bureaucratic model suggests that most policy is based on already accepted norms, or ways of doing things within the organization. Only in situations of crisis does higher-level management have the will/opportunity to create new policy. "Established procedures introduce confidence and rigidity which make it more difficult for specific crises to come to the attention of top-level decision makers. They also hamper the leader's ability to devise new responses to new situations over a short period of time. The politically successful organisation is thus most likely to be in a setting that is characterized either by stable demands or by conditions that change so rapidly and unpredictably that immediate adaptation is not desirable."<sup>107</sup> Finally, according to the systems/resource model, managers see problems because of external demands, and make

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<sup>106</sup> Huff, 1980

<sup>107</sup> Huff, 1980:170.

decisions about how to structure policy according to inflows of resources so that subunits can respond to the environment.

Huff's models are useful, especially when they are considered as existing concurrently to varying degrees within a particular organisation. Although an organisation may have a formally structured hierarchy, change processes are not necessarily constrained to these channels. The groups and elites models provide possible informal components of this structure. The bureaucratic and systems perspectives further develop this understanding by highlighting how existing practices and ways of doing, as well as the conceptualization of necessity for change affect its possibility, and shape what form it takes within the organisation.

Another political aspect of change affecting how and why processes happen involves agency exercised by individual actors. This is a function of the institutional structure, as well as of the actors' individual perceptions of power and their motivations for change. An interesting discussion of the connection between structure and agency in relation to institutional change is presented by Luong Jones (2002), who argues that although in general institutional continuities are rooted in a structural-historic context, the transfer of knowledge from the past into practice or policy in the present is neither an automatic, nor a complete process. Luong Jones states that individual actors carry learning as part of their identity, which incorporates also group identities. According to these identities and their perceived levels of agency, actors will seek to reproduce or change institutional structures. In the context of a learning system and in relation to the political decision making structures earlier outlined, an examination of the structural-historic context of the PMSA, as well as the agency of actors within it is important to understanding the possibilities for and channels through which learning and acquisition contribute to change in the structure or functioning of the institution.

"If advancing the study of institutional origin and change depends on our ability to specify the mechanisms through which institutional legacies are reproduced (or not)...then our explanations must place equal weight on the role of structure and agency."<sup>108</sup>

### 3.2 PLANNING PROCESSES

Engaging in their everyday practice, planners in the PMSA face many challenges, not least of which is that meta-theoretical problem of planning as identified by Friedmann (1987) "how to make technical knowledge in planning effective in informing public actions."<sup>109</sup> The definitions of knowledge held by the planners, their degree of agency and motivation within the organisation, and the processes, structures and norms that make up the bureaucracy are essentially what guide the institutional practice of planning. The operational steps in this process, as identified by Friedmann, involve 'problem definition, modelling and analysis, design, and evaluation.'<sup>110</sup> Occurring within three general definitions of planning, according to Friedmann, these processes involve making scientific and technical knowledge effective in its connection to action, societal guidance or social transformation in the public domain.<sup>111</sup> The connection of knowledge to action is of course, the way in which learning is leverage for change at all levels of an organisation.

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<sup>108</sup> Luong Jones, Pauline. Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Power, perceptions and pacts. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. 48-49.

<sup>109</sup> Friedmann, 1987: 37

<sup>110</sup> Friedmann, 1987: 38

<sup>111</sup> Friedmann, 1987: 37

Friedmann's definition of action, draws on Arendt (1958) to mean "to set something new into the world."<sup>112</sup> According to this definition, action needs to be "[attributable] to an actor who can be held accountable for at least its proximate consequences."<sup>113</sup> All action thus implies change, and must overcome resistance, meaning actors need power or agency to implement it. Due to the unpredictability of long-term consequences, actors also require value commitments.<sup>114</sup> Essentially, to engage in an action then, a planner uses a set of acquired or learned knowledge to implement change, which may have implications at many different levels. Further learning may occur from how this change affects the planner, their practice, relations, and the processes of the organisation, which may lead to further change or not, and so the cycle of the system continues.

According to Friedmann, a system of political order coexists together with space for revolutionary practice in a territorially organised social system. Maintenance of this system generally occurs through bureaucratic practice, while transformation is usually a result of the action or pressure from a mobilized political community acting in opposition to the state.<sup>115</sup> Change, which fits between maintenance and transformation, is the way in which radical proposals get integrated into the system through a process that often involves conflict and compromise. This change sometimes comes about through innovative planning.<sup>116</sup> Innovative planning, together with allocative and radical planning, is one of the three main types of planning identified by Friedmann existing within the system of political order. Allocative planning involves the distribution of scarce resources among competing uses, while innovative practice involves institutional changes in the system of societal guidance and radical practice draws on organised citizen power to promote projects pointing towards social transformation.<sup>117</sup> The conception of planning as contributing to societal guidance, according to Friedmann (1987, in drawing on Etzioni 1968) relies primarily on allocative and innovative forms of planning. Planning as 'social transformation' has its roots in an anarchist, Marxist tradition.<sup>118</sup> The PMSA as a PT government, actively attempts to engage in both processes of societal guidance and social transformation. An interesting question might be raised here, in terms of whether it is possible, or reasonable for a government to act in what seem to be essentially conflicting practices.

### *3.2.1 ONE BRAZILIAN'S PERSPECTIVE ON PLANNING*

In addressing this question of the seemingly conflicting roles of the state in the projects of development and governance, some relevance can be drawn from a comparative examination of Brazilian planning theory. As political and economic contexts shift, municipal governments gain increasing scope and authority for managing local regions as well as greater motivation to seek resources to carry out their new responsibilities, and perceptions about development and how best to engage in it at the level of the cities and regions, continue to change. In general, processes promoting greater liveability are growing in importance for Brazilian planners. This is well highlighted in the works of Brazilian planning theorist Marcelo De Souza (2002).

According to De Souza (2002), there are two great difficulties perceived in planning and related literature in Brazil today. One is the lack of planning, or poorly-done planning (from the point of view of those who consider city development to be a question of "technical

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<sup>112</sup> Friedmann, 1987: 37

<sup>113</sup> Friedmann, 1987: 44

<sup>114</sup> Friedmann, 1987: 45

<sup>115</sup> Friedmann, 1987: 37

<sup>116</sup> Friedmann, 1987: 32

<sup>117</sup> Friedmann, 1987: 34

<sup>118</sup> Friedmann, 1987: 38

competence”), and the other is that urban planning is an instrument of the capitalist state and serves to reproduce the status quo (from the perspective of those who consider urban problems and conflicts to be primarily “political” issues.)<sup>119</sup> To address these issues, De Souza suggests that it is necessary, and possible, to be more radical and pragmatic, less reductionist and generalistic (as two other approaches.) Thus the project of planning theory in his mind, is to change planners, empower citizens, and call for the state to maintain its capacity to plan and intervene, transforming itself to promote social justice. In essence, this involves moving planning to a more citizen responsive arena.<sup>120</sup> This project involves a state promotion and empowerment of active civil society to challenge its activities. Though it may seem counter-indicative to the concerns of the state, this actually may serve to reinforce its power by providing space for dissent, and thereby diffusing revolutionary voices. This relates to Friedmann’s conception of the balance between bureaucratic practice and revolutionary practice. It is also of course, a way in which the state continues to seek to reform its administrative structures and deal with the issues of clientelism. De Souza’s theory therefore, is less responsive to citizens than he suggests, and more reinforcing of state power than enabling of truly strong and independent civil society.

From De Souza’s perspective, North American planning theory’s recent focus on insurgent, radical planners experiences difficulty in getting beyond state-centricism and radicalizing itself towards *real* popular participation.<sup>121</sup> This question could also be raised in terms of to what degree radical and real popular participation really happens in Brazil beyond being espoused in theory. While De Souza rejects any conception of the role of the planner as advocate “medic treating a patient”, or instrument of the state, a “secretary serving a manager”, he argues that planners should be thought of as primarily *public consultants*,

“capable of counselling, from the base of their professional training to collect, maintain and integrate various and voluminous data and to reflect combining diverse spatial and temporal scales, a collectivity formed whenever and as far as possible for free citizens.”<sup>122</sup>

This implies that citizens, as free, have a *right* to be the agents responsible for the planning and management of spaces and lives.<sup>123</sup> What is missing from this assertion, as is often missing from North American arguments for citizenship rights as freedom of individual choice, is the suggestion of *responsibilities* of citizens to the social collective, as well as the necessity of empowering citizens to have the capacity to participate, as many may not be in a position to take advantage of services offered by a *public consultant*. The connotations of ‘consultant’ imply that it is still the state that is providing services to the community, a poorly veiled allusion to continuity of clientelistic relationships.

These concepts of planning, and the role of the planner within the residual cultural context of clientelistic government service delivery in Brazil are important to consider for the constraints that they may place on the ability of learning to leverage change at the higher levels of an organisation. They are also extremely relevant to consider when examining what purposes learning and change are serving. The goals and values of the organisation must be clear in terms of what purpose participation serves.

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<sup>119</sup> Lopes de Souza, 2002:12

<sup>120</sup> Lopes de Souza, 2002:13

<sup>121</sup> Lopes de Souza, 2002:14

<sup>122</sup> Lopes de Souza, 2002:14

<sup>123</sup> Lopes de Souza, 2002:14

Evident in the works of De Souza, there is a strong Brazilian tradition in planning and management to rely heavily on the ability of technology to solve problems, combined with a lack of recognition of the social roots of many systemic and complex problems facing city administrations. This is also apparent in existing studies of organisational learning processes in private organisations in Brazil,<sup>124</sup> as well as in the views expressed by planners in Santo André, most notably among those in management positions. The PMSA, as a planning organisation, and as a learning system, must be able to recognize the incompleteness of their technological mindset in order to look for alternatives. Models for learning and change that incorporate social and cultural considerations do exist in Brazil, and their value should be stressed.<sup>125</sup>

### 3.2.2 CITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

As stated by Guerra, often as the responsibility for managing development and promoting liveability increases at the level of regional governance the questions of governing the city change, from modernist issues of controlling a productive centre (who governs the city?), to questioning the place of top down authority over local governance (is it possible to govern the city?), to a focus on the opening up of local governance (How can governance be more transparent and redistributive?).<sup>126</sup> Concurrently, development aid delivery in the international context is moving away from the Fordist model of task specialization within large scale comprehensive projects at the country or region level, through a "Small is Beautiful" intermediate technology and local level solutions for local level problems such as irrigation, etc., finally becoming more targeted towards capacity building initiatives, and processes of development themselves, with a stronger expressed concern for replicability, and continuity.<sup>127</sup> In this way, development aid continues to adapt to the changing leverage points in city governance. Models of capacity building for organisational learning and change fit well into this new role of development aid.

When considering the importance of development processes as potential capacity builders in the context of everyday planning practice, it is also important to examine the larger framework within which development happens, making note of the relevant power holders and policy setters. In Brazil, the bureaucratic state has generally been the primary agent and gatekeeper in the development process, whether in local or national initiatives, or engagement with international partners. In a review of Brazilian state administrative politics between the 1930s and 1990s, Reis (1993) supports this and argues that it was the concept of development state, (pervasive in the Western capitalist world since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and reaching its peak in the south in the 1960s) that led to the continued key position of public bureaucracies in development initiatives. She draws on LaPolombara in the following passage to support this.

"For reasons that range from economic necessity to ideological rigidity, the developing nations insist that government – particularly the bureaucracy – should play a major, even exclusive, role in changes that are thought."<sup>128</sup>

<sup>124</sup> See Da Silva Santos Villela (2000) for an example of interventionist theory of organisational learning and development based on this technologically deterministic viewpoint.

<sup>125</sup> See Monteiro, Ventura and Da Cruz (1999) for some examples of these models.

<sup>126</sup> Guerra, Isabelle. "Território como espaço de ação coletiva: paradoxos e possibilidades do 'jogo estratégico de atores' no planejamento territorial em Portugal." In *Democratizar a Democracia*. Souza de Santos, Boaventura, Ed.. Sao Paulo: Bertrand Brasil, 2003. 251-289.

<sup>127</sup> Klink, Jeroen. Unpublished paper, February 2003

<sup>128</sup> LaPolombara (1963) in Reis, Elisa P. "Brazil: The Politics of State Administration." In *Politics, Administration and Public Policy in Developing Countries: Examples from Africa, Asia and Latin America*. Asmeron, H.K. and R.B. Jain, eds.. Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1993. 38.

Promoting development as a process independent of the state, for example empowering civil society to engage in the creation and management of their own development processes, even where they challenge the state, has become more common practice in Brazil only in recent years. This is partially attributable to the acquisition of state apparatus by various social movements (the rise of the PT) and to the institutionalization of various aspects of social movements into the state apparatus.

In support of this movement towards what they identify as 'people centred development',<sup>129</sup> David C. Korten and George Carner suggest that there are 'dehumanizing, inequitable, and environmentally unsustainable consequences of conventional development models' which must be countered by alternative models that promote greater liveability, or are humanizing, equitable, and environmentally sound. They suggest that in order to find these models, the development problem must be redefined, and institutions reoriented to return power over resources to the people that depend on them for livelihood.<sup>130</sup> Korten and Carner also suggest promotion of self-help to solve social problems, and meet needs, as well as "creating enabling setting within which people can be more effective in meeting those needs for themselves."<sup>131</sup> In this it is also important to consider the abilities and limits of governments as organisations engaging in development activity.

Concordant with this view of development as a capacity building tool for local empowerment, Russell Ackoff (1984), defines development as

"a capacity defined by what they [people] can do with whatever they have to improve their quality of life and that of others....possession of a desire for improvement and the ability to bring it about...a product of learning, not of production; learning how to use oneself and one's environment to better meet one's needs and those of others. Because the development process is essentially a learning process, one person cannot develop another.... therefore, a government cannot develop a country; it can only help its country develop itself"<sup>132</sup>

Ackoff suggests participation is in and of itself the most important aspect of development, and of planning processes. "the principal benefit of planning is not derived from consuming its products, plans, but from participating in the planning process."<sup>133</sup> Although it is certain that democratic participation in planning processes is an essential component of the exercise of citizenship rights and responsibilities, it is overly simplistic to say that participation is enough as the principle benefit of a process. This assertion neglects consideration of the wide range of forms of participation - from placating to citizen control,<sup>134</sup> and of the purposes of participation when it is promoted or enabled by a state -from maintenance, to suppressing revolution by allowing dissent and then mainstreaming it.

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<sup>129</sup> Korten, David C. and George Carner. People-centred development: contributions toward theory and planning frameworks. West Hartford, Conn. : Kumarian Press, 1984.

<sup>130</sup> Korten and Carner, 1984:201

<sup>131</sup> Korten and Carner, 1984:302

<sup>132</sup> Ackoff, Russell I. "On the nature of development and planning" In People-centred development: contributions toward theory and planning frameworks. Korten, David C. and George Carner, eds.. West Hartford, Conn. : Kumarian Press, 1984.

<sup>133</sup> Ackoff, 1984:195.

<sup>134</sup> Arnstein, Sherry. "A ladder of citizen participation." Journal of the American Institute of Planners. 35 (4), 1969. 216-224.

### 3.2.3 PLANNERS AS CHANGE AGENTS

As agents of liveability in their everyday practices, planners at the PMSA are actively learning and enacting planned change. The ability, the desire, and the success of action towards change is closely linked to learning. As suggested by Freire, learning and change together are effectively 'conscientization' whereby people become empowered, or "emerge from their submersion and acquire the ability to intervene in reality."<sup>135</sup> When, how, and why are planners able and motivated both to learn, and to use their learning to pursue change in the organisation? How does this affect the organisation?

"A fundamental question is, what are the processes through which people may learn to reflect critically on their experience, link it with their action, and through this, transform their world"<sup>136</sup>

One of the underlying political assumptions that PMSA planners must make in order to engage in their daily practice, is that it is possible through planning action to affect the conditions of liveability in the city, to effect positive change. As suggested by Evans,

"Confronting the practical problems of urban liveability depends on having a theory of the urban political economy that enables us to identify "agents of liveability" and to assess the conditions under which they might be successful"<sup>137</sup>

Planners must view themselves as these agents or their enablers, in order to engage in any structured processes with the intent of bettering the lives of citizens, or the living conditions of the municipality as a whole.

According to Evans, the agents of liveability are not communities themselves, but rather the state, or other institutions, in their complex interactions with communities as part of political society. The condition of liveability requires citizen empowerment and accountable governance as well as economic sustainability; things which he suggests (in drawing on Castells,) have traditionally been absent from the daily context of 'normal' urban dwellers in Latin American cities, who lack access to the transnational networks where real power exists. These 'normal' people, existing in place-space, make a physically bounded contiguity that often alone doesn't have power sufficient to control/transform society.<sup>138</sup> In Evans' view, the ability of civil society, or political community to engage the state in demands for greater liveability is compromised by the fact that their often conflicting interests and the structural and distributional injustices they face, make it almost impossible for them to be 'politically coherent' on the liveability front. It is therefore, not enough to empower communities to demand more from a more accountable state. Though "communities" at the household level may seem like a good idea for agents, "the idea that neighbourhoods of dis-privileged urban households might become agents of liveability is

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<sup>135</sup> Freire, (1971) in Reason, Peter. "New Approaches to Research for Systems Theory and Organization Development" in Systems Theory for Organization Development. Cummings, Thomas G. ed. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 1980. 39.

<sup>136</sup> Reason, 1980:38

<sup>137</sup> Evans, Peter, Ed. Livable cities? : urban struggles for livelihood and sustainability. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. 2-3

<sup>138</sup> Evans, 2002:11.



audacious” as according to Evans they the lack unity of purpose, homogeneity necessary for adequate leverage.<sup>139</sup>

Evans goes on to discuss the contradictory roles of the state in the project of liveability and the problem of the state in interaction with society. He argues that a development state, though a primary agent, is a risky partner in liveability because the social ties and capacities that help them contribute to accumulation often result in isolating state managers from poor communities. “The connections and orientations that make city administrators successful in promoting growth bias them against the projects of liveability, which are almost of necessity redistributive.”<sup>140</sup> It is important also, to note that the state in this view is composed of a variety of agencies with varying jurisdictions and authorities and often contradictory elements. This can be viewed as an advantage, because it allows for easier alliances at certain levels within the organisation with communities.<sup>141</sup>

Despite all of these perceived difficulties and complications, Evans concludes that “state society synergy” can happen, and is evident in its best form where “engaged public agencies and mobilized communities enhance one another’s capacity to deliver collective goods.”<sup>142</sup> Drawing on the works of Douglas (1998), Friedmann (1992) and Friedmann and Salguero (1988), he further asserts that empowering communities is a central necessity in the project of liveability, as poor communities are not necessarily endowed with the social capital to enable collective action. This raises the question then, of whether this is a point at which the state can intervene and empower effectively, and how they can create and maintain structures to bolster this empowerment. It also raises the issue of to what degree the state can empower citizens, when doing so may serve to challenge their authority.<sup>143 144</sup>

Evans suggests a range of things necessary to state agencies for effective engagement in these synergies with society. State agencies need to be “robust, competent, and oriented towards delivering collective goods,” while communities need the capacity to engage collectively and politically with the state. The key criteria are complementarity and embeddedness, where a mutual recognition of resources and capacities is connected to networks of concrete positive social ties, forming an ‘ecology of actors’. Two more valuable criteria which might be added to Evans’ assertion are effectiveness and responsiveness whereby the institution possesses the ability to implement action and to adapt to changing norms and conditions. In sum, according to Evans theory of the ‘agents of liveability as an ecology of actors’, there is no one ‘best’ type of agent or actor for urban liveability, as ‘individually, each of the potential agents of liveability is flawed’ by the potential conflict of their personal interests. However, a focus on sets of actors is more relevant than on communities, because communities often lack social capital or

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<sup>139</sup> Evans, 2002:14. Profound implications might be explored here, in relating Evans’ characterization of a local community without political or economic power to the works of Friedmann, who suggests that it is primarily the state’s ability to respond and institutionalize the demands of political opposition into structural reform that allow it to maintain itself as well as to cope with external change (since the political practice fosters structural innovation) and the state’s inability or repression of the the demands of the political community that often lead to revolution. (Friedmann, 1987: 35) By this logic, however, it is assumed that a political community is strong, organised, and mobilised.

<sup>140</sup> Evans, 2002:20.

<sup>141</sup> Evans, 2002:20.

<sup>142</sup> Evans, 2002:20.

<sup>143</sup> Evans, 2002:16

<sup>144</sup> Directly relevant to this, see also Friedmann’s (1987) discussion about political and bureaucratic power and the dynamic between the two forces p42

organisational capacity and are constrained by political identities and the economic framework within which they exist.

“Focusing on sets of actors is useful not because the interconnections are the solution in themselves, but because it allows us to distinguish patterns of interconnection that enhance liveability from patterns than undercut it. An understanding of urban liveability must begin with analysis of the variations among different ecologies of agents in different urban settings, always looking for the possibility of synergy but always sensitive to the possibility of negative intervention.”<sup>145</sup>

In the case of the PMSA, this ecology of actors is the planners engaged in organisational learning processes through the GEPAM project.

### 3.3 CONNECTING PLANNING IN PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS TO LEARNING AND CHANGE THEORY

In drawing together all of the theories presented about organisation, learning, change, decision making, planning, political contexts and actors as change agents, study of organisational learning in a public institution is presented here as a case study example. This study clearly demonstrates the need for analytical connection between all of these factors, and very effectively encapsulates some main points relevant to the study of learning and change processes in public organisations.

In their study of the Swiss postal service, Finger and Brand explore the capacities for and development of learning organisations in the public sector in the search to meet strategic objectives.<sup>146</sup> They suggest that in the public sector, even the concept of learning organisation is made fragile by the difficulty of separating means and ends and assert that essentially, to be a learning organisation is to be more effective in being adaptive or reactive – as environmental pressures create necessity for change.<sup>147</sup> They go on to argue that in a sense of organisational structure and efficiency, public sector organisations have been relatively protected and tended towards bureaucracy because of their generally monopolist positions. In their view, this is increasingly challenged as the public sector undergoes significant reform, in a short period of time in response to challenges including increasing global competition, the changing nature of work and the crisis of legitimacy of the state. To address this, the authors suggest that public organisations should pay particular attention to the following assertions:

- Transforming administration is useless without similarly transforming the wider political context in which it exists.
- Management science overlooks the political organisation of organisations in terms of power relations and strategic actors, which are essential to consider when dealing with bureaucracy and entrenched practices.

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<sup>145</sup> Evans, 2002:23.

<sup>146</sup> Finger, Matthias and Burgin Brand, Silvia. “Conceito de ‘Organização de Aprendizagem’ Aplicado A Transformação do Setor Público: Contribuições Conceituais ao Desenvolvimento da Teoria.” In Aprendizagem Organizacional e Organização de Aprendizagem: Desenvolvimento na Teoria e na Prática. Eds. Easterby-Smith, Mark, John Burgoyne e Luis Araujo. São Paulo: Editora Atlas S.A., 2001. 165-195.165.

<sup>147</sup> Finger and Burgin Brand, 2001:166

- Procedural approaches are most effective at creating change because they progressively deal with issues of bureaucracy while maintaining a contextualized, somewhat global vision.<sup>148</sup>

“Public sector organisations operate in a political arena as political actors on one side and citizens and society on the other.... the public mission, the role of public interest, the responsibility to citizens, and the mode of financing, all implicate that public sector organisations are part of a larger system. This also signifies that their transformation is related to transformation of the larger system, as well as to the variable relation between different elements of the system.”<sup>149</sup>

These assertions are very relevant to the PMSA as a public organisation and the planners' engagement in organisational learning processes. Through the analysis presented in this thesis, learning processes in the organisation are examined as occurring among individual actors in their daily practices, through their relationships and the structures and processes of the organisation. Throughout, the analysis highlights the manifestation of political aspects of the organisation in the strategic roles and agency of actors and the practices of decision-making. It presents the ways in which learning leverages change, and also characterizes the depth of this learning in terms of its transformative qualities and the possibilities for institutionalization. Finally, at a meta-level of learning (about learning), changes in the GEPAM approach are explored, highlighting the recognition that a more procedural approach to learning and change would be more appropriate than the direct implementation of a new management model.

### 3.4 PLANNING IN THE PMSA WITH ITS POLITICAL AGENDA

Learning processes of the PMSA occurring through the GEPAM project are components of planning practice taking place in a public organisation; which is in itself a complex and dynamic entity. As a starting point for the analysis in this thesis, a theoretical model of organisation is built through the preceding sections with specific relevance to those aspects of the PMSA functioning as a public planning organisation that affect or are affected by learning processes associated with the GEPAM project. Individuals within the organisation, structured relationships among them and between them and the community, and organisational processes are the components of the PMSA as a learning system. These components make up an open system of fluxes and transformations occurring over time, culturally and socially defined and mediated by political relations, bureaucratic and historical materialist structures. The organisation's environment, capacity, motivation and performance are also relevant to its active engagement in learning and change,<sup>150</sup> both overall and among the various components making up the system. These factors are interpreted differently by each actor within the organisation, affecting the relationships between factors as well as between components of the organisation. These components, factors, and their interpretation vary over time, but not necessarily consistently with one another.

The environment of the PMSA as a PT planning organisation brings with it strong political support for direct democratic participation by citizens in the decision making processes of local government, as well as the other aspects important to liveability mentioned above. This is guided by particular administrative and legal opportunities and constraints. Those relevant to this thesis, State Watershed Protection Laws and the Municipal Charter, were already discussed in

<sup>148</sup> Finger and Burgin Brand, 2001:172

<sup>149</sup> Finger and Burgin Brand, 2001:170

<sup>150</sup> Lusthaus, Charles, G. Anderson and E. Murphy. Institutional Assessment: A Framework for Strengthening Organizational Capacity for IDRC's Research Partners. Ottawa: IDRC, 1995.

sections 2.2 and 2.1 respectively. A hierarchical structure of departments operates within the PMSA, with sub-offices reporting to secretariats, whose directors report directly to the office of the Mayor. There is also a municipal council, made up of elected officials representing different neighbourhoods, who hold voting power in terms of municipal legislation. Legislation relevant to planning is generally presented to the council as a bill by the mayor, and then voted upon. Within the PMSA staff, roughly half are party members politically appointed to positions by the elected government, while the remainder are technical staff, or tenured civil servants.

Within the PMSA, political conflict exists, as well as various levels of technological expertise or experience, conceptions about stakeholderism in particular endeavours, and particular assumptions of social and cultural norms. Roughly half of PMSA staff are politically appointed, with no tenure, and without specific, formal job-related training, often in positions with significant decision-making power. The other half of the staff are tenured civil servants, many with extensive formal training and specialization, often in highly technical fields, hired through formal processes involving examinations, who often have low decision making power or influence in the organisation, but high job security and protected pensions. Politically appointed staff and civil servants often resent one another and this affects their motivations for certain actions. For example, politically appointed staff may be more or less reluctant to attempt the implementation and institutionalization of a radical practice, depending on their perceptions of risk and potential advantages. They may also possess greater ability to do so, depending on both their formal position within the organisational hierarchy and their informal degree of agency. Often, they are reluctant to attempt new practices where they perceive the risk to outweigh the potential benefit. Similarly, civil servants may be more or less inclined to pursue particular projects, but are often reluctant to question practices when they feel their voice will not be acknowledged and sometimes exhibit apathy or mention feelings of disconnection from information or decision making processes.

Through the analysis planning is presented as a series of political acts within and by the organisation that are highly dependent on the organisation and its actors motivation and capacity, as well as the afore-mentioned environmental context. In this action, planners and community members are agents in the ongoing project of liveability. Liveability in this context means sustainable and ecologically harmonious livelihood generation, as well as citizen empowerment, connection to place, and democratic participation in decisions affecting these places. Motivation within the organisation to pursue liveability is mandated by the PT's approach to municipal activism, and a commitment to this value is apparent among leadership of the departments involved in the GEPAM project. It is also evident in the string of projects supporting these values which the PMSA has previously developed and taken part in, as well as in their strong activism in creating capacity-building linkages with other cities through poverty reduction networks, etc. Organisational learning, as a conscious process, has great potential to contribute to the PMSA's organisational performance in fostering conscious reflection about actions and supporting positive change at the levels of practice, value and institutional structure to promote greater effectiveness, relevance and efficiency of tasks within the organisation.

### 3.5 GEPAM AND THE CHANGING PMSA

The actors involved in developing the GEPAM project began with the idea that changing the structure of municipal service delivery, information management, concepts of watershed management and gaining new practical skills for things like participatory planning workshops, conflict resolution, ESAs, infrastructure upgrading would provide a better understanding of the conditions of the watershed protection area, and would help them devise a more effective regional

management model.<sup>151</sup> They focussed on change as the achievement of a desired state, a new and better way of doing things.<sup>152</sup> The goals of the project, or desired future state, were viewed as a change in management practice through learning new techniques and changing practices, achievable through transformation and innovation.

Through the implementation phases of the GEPAM project, planners felt some of the tools and processes used were effective, while some faced constraints that the planners had difficulty overcoming. Some tools and processes had unexpected results. Several planners noted that in fact what had been created was a management system that although it was more efficient in terms of service delivery in certain key areas, also effectively repeated some of the negative outputs that they had been experiencing before, amplifying them and changing them, as well as creating new problems. The planning model implemented was not perfect but as soon as it was in place it was very effective in maintaining its own stability. Some interviewees noted that it would be more useful to create a project with stronger capabilities to be reflective itself, that had built in reflection, that would effectively be a process for conceptualising, developing and institutionalizing learning processes within a planning organisation, so that their activities and structure could be reflected upon and changed when necessary to meet changing conditions and conceptions of needs and values. Predetermined goals about the desired future state of the organisation as assumed by the GEPAM model were not appropriate to the PMSA's purposes, as the planners ideas about how government should work to promote liveability needed to have room to incorporate change. The planners' purposes for change as a means to achieve a desired future state shifted to a consideration of value inherent in the processes of the project model itself. The language used by planners in documents and in speaking publicly about the value of the project shifted from the idea of an operational group of planners implementing a new management model, to a vision of a dynamic planning team engaging in learning processes not only about changing management structures, but also about learning itself.

The GEPAM project involves various levels of organisation within the PMSA interacting within a larger system over time. At the different levels of organisation there are processes involving individuals, their roles and relationships to one another and the PMSA, and structures that make up the PMSA. Over time, through relationships at each level, interactions between levels, and due to pressures of external forces, the GEPAM project, as a part of the PMSA system, exhibits change or stability in its various elements. Various feedback loops operate in the system, for example, negative feedback pushes the system back towards greater stability, while positive feedback pushes it towards a new context. Neither the levels of organisation nor the effects of interactions between various parts are distinct.

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

The case study of organisational learning within the PMSA as a function of the GEPAM project as presented in this thesis involves grounded research. The primary source of data were interviews held over a six month period with planners at the PMSA engaged in some aspects of

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<sup>151</sup> From documented personal communications between project partners during inception stage, as well as from personal interviews with key partners. All information from this point forward where it refers to planners perceptions is collected from personal communications, as well as informal conversations and the formal interviews with key planners undertaken as research for this thesis. These perceptions as they are represented do not necessarily reflect the views of all of the planners involved. Generalisations are made only where evidence was obtained from a number of sources. Conflicting evidence will also be noted where obtained.

<sup>152</sup> See the earlier discussion of Legge's dichotomy between change towards a purposeful goal as opposed to change processes as an end in and of themselves, section 3.1.5

the GEPAM project. Participant observation from two years of my involvement with the project, in a variety of departments and capacities, both in Canada and at the PMSA, was also central to the research, as well as in-depth review of official project documents, communications, and other materials produced in relation to or through the project. The principal steps in the development of the research were as follows:

1. My introduction to the GEPAM project and the PMSA in 2001, my involvement in delivery of some GEPAM activities, meeting and working with PMSA staff – and first opportunities to develop interest in issues surrounding the effectiveness of the technology transfer processes and their institutionalization in the PMSA.
2. Discussion of ideas with planners and project managers at the PMSA who were involved in the GEPAM project.
3. Formulation of a general plan to study the organisation and functioning of technology transfer through the GEPAM project at the PMSA.
4. Data collection – document search, participant observation and informal communication with planners and community members affected by the GEPAM project, as well as literature review of relevant theories.
5. Identification of Organisational Learning and Planned Change theories as relevant to case study of GEPAM.
6. Formal interviews with planners, further data gathering from documents
7. Review of theory for connection to data gathered.
8. Establishment of framework for analysis
9. Data analysis according to criteria set out in framework
10. Presentation, implications and conclusions

Through my involvement with the GEPAM project, as a participant observer, I raised questions to planners about organisational learning processes within the PMSA and the translation of that learning to change as it related to the GEPAM project. From interviewees' responses, it became clear that a shared understanding of the organisation's learning processes through the GEPAM project, and how and why the positive outcomes of this learning were effectively institutionalized or not, did not exist. Interviewees concurred with my suggestion that this impeded some positive outcomes of GEPAM from occurring in the PMSA. After more consultation with a range of planners at the PMSA, I determined that it would be useful to the goals of GEPAM and to a wider audience to examine and make explicit the planners perceptions about organisational learning processes occurring within the PMSA in relation to the GEPAM project. I felt this would provide insights to planners at the PMSA and to others about how learning outcomes could better be captured within the organisation, and how learning processes could be better facilitated in the future through restructuring. Planners I spoke with at the PMSA agreed that qualitative research about learning processes occurring through the GEPAM project would be useful and relevant to their everyday work and as a contribution to planning knowledge.

Qualitative research, though extremely useful for rich descriptions of complex situations and the presentation of diverse conceptualisations of real world issues, can sometimes encounter difficulties in assuring rigour. Rigour is understood in this context to mean reliability, validity and objectivity<sup>153</sup>. However, the object of the research undertaken for this thesis is not to find objective results for generalization about a particular theory or set of theories. The object, in drawing on a range of theories and ideas, is to characterize perspectives about a set of real processes from which insights and ideas for future action might be drawn, and reflections in support of or contrary to particular aspects of a theory be asserted. In this particular case, objectivity is neither appropriate nor possible. Credibility is more relevant than internal validity to the case study of the GEPAM project presented in this thesis. The value of this research lies more in the uncovering of experiences according to how they are perceived by subjects, than in the verification of whether subjects' perceptions agree with some pre-constructed definition. As argued by Sandelowski (1986), in this context, truth is more appropriately 'subject oriented' than 'researcher defined'.<sup>154</sup> Reliability is assured through triangulation of data in drawing on participant observation and document analysis wherever possible to broaden the range of views presented about the particular issues, and through clear presentation of perceptions as perceptions rather than as facts.

Through direct interviews with planners, participant observation, and the examination of a variety of data from document sources, including records of communications, reports, publications, and interviews, the research for this case study examines how planners view the 'reality' of learning processes occurring in their individual practice, through their relationships, and in the structures and processes of the PMSA. The interviewees observations about learning and change processes at these three levels of organisation are categorized into practical learning and change, transformative learning, and meta-learning about learning. My reflections in these areas through participant observation and document analysis are noted in relation to those made by the interviewees. I then connect this to the theories earlier discussed and highlight how planners' perceptions of learning relate to my own observations and to the 'reality' of learning and institutional change in the PMSA.

For this research I sought interviews with all planners who had been involved in at least some aspect of development or implementation of the GEPAM project. I identified existing and previous planners involved with the project through a variety of sources, including records of project development communications, attendance sheets and minutes of meetings from strategic planning sessions, quarterly and annual review sessions, as well as from direct indication by planners involved. Of the individuals involved over the course of the five years of project development and implementation, several had left the PMSA and of these, only two were successfully contacted for interview. Others were unavailable for interview due to scheduling or other constraints. All in all, twenty-one planners were interviewed for this study. Two were no longer employed by the PMSA. Three are directors of secretariats. Seven are department heads within secretariats. Two are division managers.<sup>155</sup> Of the remaining seven, three are currently team leaders of GEPAM project implementation. Of the twenty-one planners interviewed, thirteen were politically appointed staff, and the remaining eight were civil servants, or technical staff. Notably, seven of the twenty-one were currently pursuing Master's degrees in planning-related fields on a part time basis. Six had already completed Master's projects, and three were currently teaching Master's level courses at local universities. Additionally, six community

<sup>153</sup> Sandelowski, Margaret. "The problem of rigor in qualitative research." *ANS*, 1986, 8(3) 27-37, 27

<sup>154</sup> Slevick(1971) in Sandelowski, 1986:30

<sup>155</sup> The PMSA is organised into Secretariats, all reporting to the Office of the Mayor. Many Secretariats are split into several Departments, and some Departments contain multiple Divisions.

members involved with the direct implementation of GEPAM activities were interviewed for their reflections on learning processes at the PMSA as experienced through interaction at the community level.

Project documents studied included inception reports, hundreds of email records and other written communications between project partners from 1998 – 2003, minutes of strategic planning sessions, quarterly and annual reports, a range of project publications, and journal articles. These were gathered from archives filed at the PMSA throughout the various departments involved with the project. Requests were made to all interviewees for additional documents, which were also used.

After completing the literature review and gathering the data, I constructed a framework for analysis. Drawing from theories about organisation, as well as from my observations, I categorised data according to their relevance to individual, relationships or structural/procedural aspects of the organisation. Additionally, I used theories of organisational learning and planned change to identify learning processes and associated changes as perceived by the planners. I used theories about the political structure of organisation and decision-making models for context and to back up observations qualifying perceived opportunities and constraints.

I tape-recorded, translated and transcribed interviews in Portuguese and English, before grouping comments loosely, noting significant areas of common focus and divergent opinions. I also referred to notes from participant observation taken during the interviews. I confirmed opinions through follow-up contact with interviewees where necessary. Interviewees were also invited to offer any follow up comments they desired or to raise questions about the research. None did. Triangulated with data from extensive document search and my own personal knowledge about the project, I checked facts, added context, and constructed a general narrative about learning processes and change at the PMSA through the GEPAM project.

After completing the analysis, I drew implications that I feel are relevant to the future of the GEPAM project, as well as to the development of organisational learning theory and practice. A version of the thesis will be translated to Portuguese and made available to all of the planners and community members who contributed their involvement as per earlier agreement.

## 4.2 INTERVIEW PROCESS

The interviews were informally structured, taped, confidential conversations with planners ranging in length from ½ hour to 1.5 hours. Planners were provided with information about the general purposes of the study in advance of the interview, as well as with forms detailing the confidentiality of their responses. According to the approved Ethical Review, all interviewees signed statements of written consent for their participation in the study. Interviews generally began with several questions about the planner's position and practice in the organisation, as well as their previous training, formal or otherwise. Planners were then invited to offer opinions about aspects of learning and change in relation to the functioning of the organisation. This data was later categorized into aspects of individuals, relationships and institutional processes and structures, with regards to the GEPAM project where appropriate.

During the interviews, many planners expressed a strong desire to relate stories of personal experiences, involving practices, opportunities and constraints that they faced in the effective accomplishment of their daily tasks. Many planners engaged in descriptive narratives about challenges encountered or successes achieved through the project. Several noted that an oral history of the project would be a useful tool for institutional memory. With the exception of



department heads and directors of secretariats, interviewees were more likely to discuss opportunities and constraints to their daily practices than they were to identify strengths and weaknesses at a larger scale, involving longer range learning processes or organisational development, which they discussed only when questioned directly. Many interviewees used the time as an opportunity to voice opinions about particular value transformations that occurred through some processes of the GEPAM project. Several also used it as an opportunity to voice opinions about past and existing conflicts within the organisation, especially those between technical and politically appointed staff. Overall, most interviewees stressed a high occurrence of learning in practical and transformative senses, resulting in some changes in practice within the organisation, and some changes in organisational values. Less meta-level learning was noted to be occurring within the organisation. When it was noted, it was generally indicated that higher level learning through reflection, though it had occurred on several occasions, could not be easily institutionalized. Ideas about structural changes at a meta-level of the organisation existed, but little real change at this level actually happened, according to participants' perceptions and consistent with my observations.

Interviewees expressed different levels of concern about the confidentiality of the interviews. Several indicated that although they had critical opinions of some aspects of the PMSA's organisational structure and functioning, they were unwilling to disclose these opinions, as they felt it would be politically risky to do so. Opinions diverged substantially on several points, notably those related to the usefulness of existing structure and functioning of particular departments within the PMSA, as well as about the transformative substance of learning with regards to community participation. Interviewees generally agreed however, about where learning and change took place through the organisation, and where they were constrained, etc.

## **5. ANALYSIS**

The case study analysis presented here clarifies where, according to the interviewees' perceptions, GEPAM promoted learning and/or leveraged change in the PMSA. Also, it highlights perceived blockages to learning and change, and indicates possible pathways or strategies to address this in future projects. From this, implications and recommendations for strengthening existing projects or designing future projects can be drawn. In identifying possible combinations of learning processes and change strategies, the analysis explores three general aspects of change and their interrelationships within the organisation as a system. This is related to a summary of the findings presented for three components of the organisation: individuals, relationships, and processes. Implications of the findings of the analysis and their relation to the theories discussed in Section 3 are presented in Section 6.

### **5.1 LEARNING PROCESSES AND CHANGE AT 3 LEVELS OF ANALYSIS**

Organisational learning and change occurring as functions of the GEPAM project within the PMSA can be characterized as outcomes of the interactions between individuals, their relationships, and the processes making up the organization. In each of these components learning outcomes are classified at three levels of analysis: changes in practice, values transformations, or meta-level reflections about learning. Figure 1 (p.45) illustrates the conceptual interrelationships between each of these elements. Practical learning is here defined as a consciously changed way of doing something, the acquisition of a new skill or technical knowledge. Learning as a value transformation is defined as a changed way of understanding individuals, relations, processes or structures (for ex. a change in belief or perception). Finally, meta-level learning is an act of conscious reflection about a way of understanding or doing something in an organisational

context. Learning processes can be manifest in specific, discrete actions, or integrated into larger systemic change. Their outcomes may be sustained over time or not.

In this analysis, learning and change according to planners' perceptions are identified for the following three organisational components: individuals, structured relationships and organisational processes. As such, they involve varying degrees of action, (which according to Friedmann (1987) in drawing on Arendt, means setting something new in the world,) combined with either learning as a process of conscious thinking, or acquisition as a subconsciously changed practice. The presence or absence in various combinations of these elements is qualified as status quo, learning, change, or learning and change. In a situation of status quo, there must be neither action nor conscious reflection or awareness indicated. For learning only, there may be conscious reflection or awareness indicated, but no action. This can be accompanied by the indication of a perceived weakness or barrier to action. In a situation of change, there must be action, which may be reflective of acquisition, but no conscious reflection or indication of strengths, weaknesses opportunities or constraints to action. Where learning and change co-exist there must be action and conscious reflection, which may or may not be accompanied by acquisition. The identification of single vs. double loop learning processes is also indicated, as are constraints on transition from acquisition to formalised institutionalized learning or from formal learning to acquisition in daily practice.

The PMSA is an organised open system<sup>o</sup> moving over time in a changing environment to become system<sup>1</sup>, system<sup>2</sup>. The system is composed of individuals, relationships, and processes. The system functions by taking in matter, energy and information as inputs, then processing them to create outputs, which may serve to become new inputs, and may support continuity or change. One of the inputs to the system is GEPAM. Interacting with various components of the system, GEPAM contributes to changes in the outputs, and affects how the organisation as a whole moves over time to become system<sup>1</sup>, system<sup>2</sup>, and so on. The entire system, including all of its components, their interactions with each other and with the inputs and outputs is considered and analysed here according to three interlinked levels of learning and change, namely: practical learning and changes in practices, value transformations, and meta-level learning. Together, these form a spectrum of learning processes and associated changes in the organisation as it moves through time, and as such are both the drivers and the manifestations of organisational change.

In this analysis, each level of learning and change, (i.e. practice, value transformation, and meta-level learning), is examined in three components of the organisation, namely: individual daily practices, structured relationships, and organisational processes. The analysis demonstrates interaction between levels of learning. For examples, 'acquired' changes in individual practice are observed to have effects on relationships or structures of the organisation (moving towards learning), while changes in organisational structure can create new relations, and lead to new opportunities for acquisition.

Learning outcomes are manifest in many different ways at various levels and in different aspects of the PMSA. At the level of practical learning for individual daily practice, the use of a new skill (for example, the classification of land into Environmentally Sensitive Areas - ESAs) is representative of learning, while at the level of practical learning in relationships, a change might be a new relationship between planners and community members for the sake of communicating information (planners asking residents for information). At the level of practical learning in organisational structure, the implementation of ESAs with community consultation would be evidence of institutional learning and change.

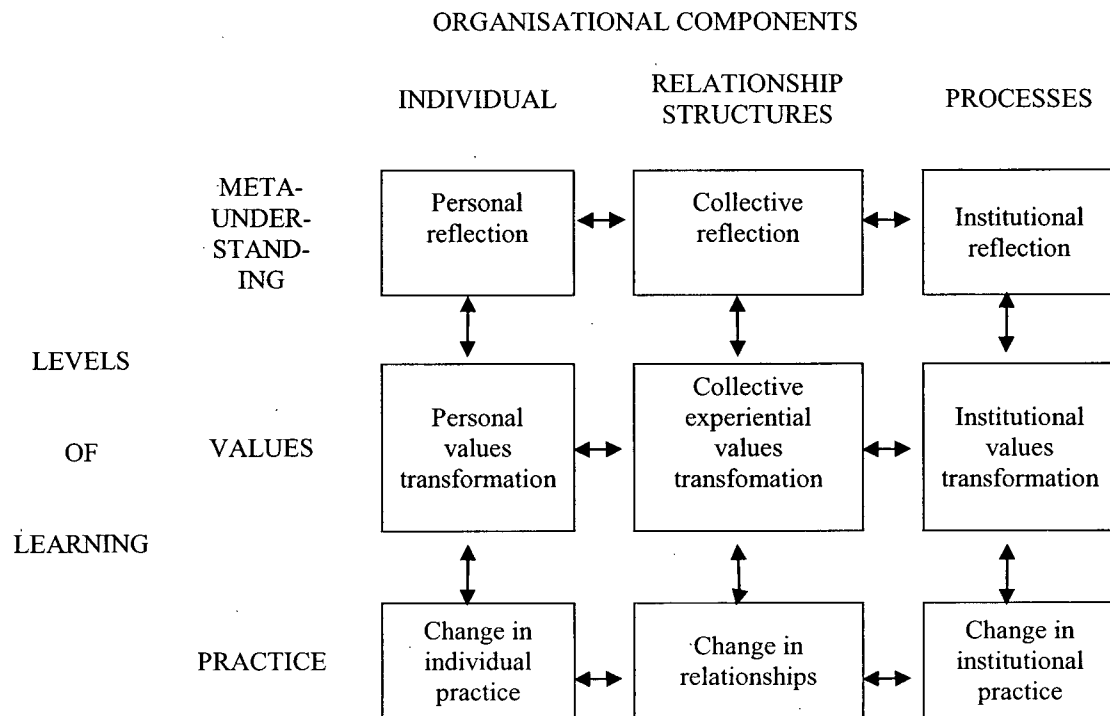
Learned value transformations could occur at an individual level with a new way of thinking about an issue (for example, placing stewardship promotion above settlement prevention.) Value transformation in relationships could be a changed way of valuing or legitimizing each other's opinions (for example planners and community members' ideas about how to manage an area are equally weighted in decision making processes.) Values transformation at a structural level could be the implementation of a new structure for decision making (such as a council of representatives for example.)

At a meta-level, individual learning could be an understanding of how a transformed value or way of thinking emerged (for example, reflecting on how an individual learns and acquires new skills through practice.) A meta-level learning about relationships could be an understanding about learning dynamics between staff and a manager (for example that space for personal reflection about work promotes learning and is valuable.) This could then be manifest in a meta-level structural learning such as the institutionalization of reflection in the organisational process, or the creation of a policy for monthly group reflection, or the implementation of formal structures for sustained conscious learning processes within the organisation such as regular workshops, seminars, etc. As further explained in this analysis, the perceptions presented by planners indicate the following consequences:

Upper level, or structural/procedural learning in practice contributes to change in lower level values transformations (individual values.) Upper level, structural/procedural values transformation can leverage lower level meta-learning (individual reflection.) Lower level meta learning can bolster implementation of higher level structural/procedural values transformation, while lower level values transformation can bolster high level changes in practice. Further, between each type of learning, a relationship of reinforcement and potential leverage for change exists, as well as between each organisational component (individual, relationship structures and processes.) Learning and change at different levels and across different components thus make up a tightly interlinked network within the organisation.

In general, meta-level learning is often more reflective of conscious learning than are values transformations and changes in daily practice. Conversely, lower level changes in practice often exemplify results of acquisition. It follows then, that the movement of a particular learning from acquisition of a practice, through the various levels of the organisation and arenas of change, towards conscious learning and reflection, as well as moving from the highest meta-level of structural learning, down through values transformation and out to personal practice and acquisition are difficult, but possible. Upper level meta-learning and change has greater potential for leverage over the structures and activities of the organisation as a whole and for longer term change through institutionalization, though it still may face many constraints in implementation, especially with regards to overcoming values assumptions inherent in the organisational structure, in relationships and in daily practices. Lower level changes in individual practice occurring through acquisition, though encountering fewer barriers at individual levels, are more difficult to amplify and institutionalize in the organisation as a whole. Qualitatively, learning and change in organisational structure do not depend heavily on practical applicability at the level of daily practice, being sometimes simply policy driven. They may therefore be at higher risk of irrelevance to the issues at hand. Practically acquired changes, while not necessarily always in accordance with goals held at a higher level of the organisation, may also be more relevant immediately perceived solutions to tasks. Monitoring and assessment of learning and change at all levels, though difficult, is thus very relevant to effective organisational functioning.

Figure 1. LEVELS OF LEARNING IN ORGANISATION



## 5.2 PRACTICAL LEARNING: Daily practice

This section presents an analysis of the practical learning of the PMSA associated with the development and implementation of the GEPAM project. The focus is on learning outcomes noted by planners at the levels of individuals, relationships and structures and processes that make up the organisation. Contextual details are included wherever possible and a chronological narrative form is used.

### *The Actors*

Learning began, through the GEPAM project, when a group of key individuals from academic, political, and technical, environmental institutions came together to share their knowledge of the issue of informal settlements in Watershed Protection Areas (a problem that was achieving growing recognition in the São Paulo Metropolitan area, as well as other Brazilian cities,) and their ideas for potential approaches to dealing with it. Erika De Castro, (architect and former Director of Campus Construction and Planning at the University of São Paulo, who had recently completed her master's thesis<sup>156</sup> in the School of Community and Regional Planning at UBC,) together with Dra. Erminia Maricato (Director of the Housing Laboratory at USP's school of Architecture and Planning,) Dr. Arlindo Phillipi (professor at USP's School of Public Health,) Dr. Gilda C. Bruna (Executive President and Metropolitan Director of EMPLASA, a state infrastructure management agency,) and in collaboration with researchers and practitioners from UBC's Centre for Human Settlements, began to discuss possibilities for a project related to the issues surrounding management of Watershed Protection Areas in the Billings Reservoir of Greater São Paulo. The recently elected PT mayor of Santo André Celso Daniel, (also a professor

<sup>156</sup> Ms. DeCastro's thesis was a study of a World Bank funded watershed management project in the Guapiranga basin

at PUC University in São Paulo,) was approached to discuss possibilities for the City of Santo André to become a partner in a proposal for a poverty reduction project.

### *Their Purpose*

The key individuals were interested in sharing knowledge and ideas about a problem, and a possible intervention. In this case, there was both an interest expressed in collaboration on a poverty reduction and capacity building project between the Centre for Human Settlements (CHS) at UBC and the PMSA, and awareness that funding could be available through a technology transfer fund, offered through the CIDA/Brazil bilateral aid program. Both CHS and the PMSA were interested in academic/institutional partnerships at the time, and the idea of a collaborative learning model seemed much more appropriate than the more traditional project structure of development aid delivered through direct skills transfer, infrastructure works, etc. The structure of CIDA's program therefore contributed to the project being structured in this particular way.<sup>157</sup>

### *The Facts*

The initial issue identified by the GEPAM development team was that Santo André's Watershed Protection Area, when designated according to State law in 1975 (a law restricting most development and making new settlement illegal even though many areas already contained established urban areas,) encompassed part of a biosphere reserve, some remnants of coastal Atlantic rainforest, several semi-rural communities and informal settlements of varying legality, a municipal park, several long established, large and still rapidly growing favelas, a historic railway village designated a world heritage site, and a large chemical plant. Because state law delegates municipal responsibility for managing WPAs, Santo André was mandated to protect the Billings Reservoir area, which was increasingly threatened by rising levels of informal settlement resulting from a number of social and economic causes. The difficulties of regulating the WPA area were compounded by a physical separation between it and the urban centre of Santo André, created by an arm of the Billings reservoir. This presented challenges to monitoring and service provision, as well as compounding difficulties of dealing with high unemployment rates and low levels of citizenship identification with the municipality among residents living in the WPA. The WPA did generate some property tax revenues from legal property owners and industry (including a large chemical plant in the area.) The WPA was otherwise very difficult to manage for the municipality and strained their financial resources for service provision, protection from the threats of occupation, and preservation of the environmental quality. There was opportunity perceived, however, to prevent worsening of these problems, as the area still had relatively low levels of settlement in comparison with the neighbouring municipalities. Some of these municipalities expressed interest in collaborating with Santo André for information sharing, service provision and infrastructure construction.

### *Setting Objectives*

The process of formulating the GEPAM project proposal involved extensive communication between key planners, each bringing a particular set of values and experiences to the process, then working together to determine how the problem could be conceptualised, what sort of structure could best address the needs of the municipality, etc. The funders reviewed the ambitious proposal multiple times and requested a series of modifications before finally accepting it. Through this year-long process, the key actors developed a shared understanding of the

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<sup>157</sup> Under CIDA's bilateral aid agreement with Brazil funding can be provided to Canadian organisations for technology transfer projects involving sharing skills and learning technologies, matched by in-kind donations from Brazilian partners. No funding is available from CIDA either to pay Brazilian professionals, or to undertake infrastructure works.

purposes of various aspects of the proposal and the values underlying it. They also developed shared aspirations for where the project would lead in terms of redefining both the way people thought about watershed protection, and the way local government addressed it, and hopes that this could be multiplied in other cities.

The presence of key actors, their roles within their various organisations, and the values they held in terms of environmental protection, poverty reduction, citizenship and participation, as well as their relations of trust and mutual respect for one another and willingness to learn about one another's values in these key areas, were vital to the formulation of the project proposal, the values it supported, and the ability for it to be incorporated into the municipal structure. The knowledge and leverage brought to the project by key actors was a very important initial input to the creation of structures for organisational learning processes. Most interviewees indicated an awareness of the importance of all of these factors, and suggested that in this, practical learning in the organisation happened among individuals in their daily practices, in the ways they interacted, and in the creation of the project team, as well as the structures it would use. This learning was substantive, procedural, comprehensive, and institutionalized through the adoption of the project.

Several key planners involved in GEPAM in Santo André note that they quickly came to view the project and the issues of managing the watershed protection area as important to the PMSA's political image as a government on the vanguard of environmental protection initiatives and strongly involved in direct democratic participation. They attribute this valuation to the high profile nature of the international partnership, the growing recognition of watershed protection as a development priority in the São Paulo Metropolitan Area, and the PT's strong emphasis on citizen participation.

### *Developing Ideas*

The formulation of the GEPAM work plan that followed from the initial project proposal incorporated the values of the key actors and their perceptions of needs for effectively managing the area. The first of these needs identified was information about the WPA. Questions were raised about how this information would be gathered, and for what purposes. The key participants demonstrated a common value of high levels of citizen participation in deciding that a group of community representatives and leaders should be created to accompany all stages of the project's development, from its initial formulation to the development of pilot projects and so on. In this way, citizens would be involved in learning processes through shared decision making about how to manage the Watershed Protection Area. Community leaders and representatives, invited to join the project meetings, accompanied a visit to Canada to study watershed planning models in 1998, as well as the structure and functioning of NGOs in Canada. Several community participants in this trip who were interviewed noted that they felt it provided an opportunity to interact on a more equal level with the planners. In Canada, they were out of their normal "planner delivers services to community member who makes demands" roles and could interact and learn from a position of equals, and be treated by others as equals.<sup>158</sup> Community members were not however, directly involved in discussions or decisions about how the GEPAM project would be structured. Several of the planners interviewed noted that they face a constant dilemma of trying to involve community members and encourage their active participation in various initiatives, while at the same time, not getting people's hopes up for things beyond the planners' abilities to accomplish. Both planners and community members interviewed noted that including community members on

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<sup>158</sup> From personal interviews, 2003. Note that some individuals in the planning organisation who were not invited on this trip noted that they felt it denoted favoritism towards particular people, who were given the advantage of a free trip to visit another culture, gain a new perspective, and critiqued the lack of democratic process in deciding who would be invited to participate in the mission.

the board represented significant change in the organisation. While community members indicated learning from the change in setting during their visit to Canada, and felt that inclusion in the decision making process demonstrated the possibility of interacting with government in new ways, this was not referred to by many of the planners interviewed, and did not result in an institutionalized change.

At the beginning of the GEPAM project, in determining a strategy for resolving the issue of informal settlements in the WPA, the general consensus among key planners was that the first priority was to gather information, to gain a better understanding of the characteristics of the watershed in order to develop a plan of action. Due to perceived time constraints in the need to gather as much information as rapidly as possible in order to create a plan that could begin to be carried out immediately to address the continually growing issues, a Rapid Watershed Analysis was undertaken for the entire Billings reservoir. This involved the collection and consolidation of all available biophysical and cultural data sets from the entire Billings reservoir. It was soon discovered (through this process,) that the task was extensive, and the work to follow would be even more so. Interviewees noted that even before the project began, the team of planners and technical staff working out of SEMASA (Santo André's public works and infrastructure provider) to visit the area, speak with the residents to determine their needs, gather information and provide services, felt overburdened. It was stressed by several planners that they faced difficulties in acquiring the resources that they needed to do their jobs, as requests to other municipal departments for resources or support were often ignored or met with delayed response as a result of the WPA not being as high on the list of municipal priorities as other activities.<sup>159</sup> It became apparent that the municipality required a team of professionals dedicated to servicing the area who could also have their offices based there. From this came the idea for the Sub-Prefeitura of Paranapiacaba and Parque Andreense, (SPPPA). The SPPPA is a regional management Secretariat structured the same way as a Prefeitura (municipal government), made up of a politically appointed sub-mayor and staff, capable of handling all service provision for the WPA while legally only holding the rights of a Secretariat and accountable to the PMSA. Planners indicated a great deal of learning occurred during this phase, in terms of their awareness of data needs, of existing conditions and community needs, and of the magnitude of the tasks they faced. As indicated by planners interviewed, this learning led directly to the idea for the creation of a regional Secretariat (the SPPPA), to manage the area. In this way, practical learning was transformed into institutionalized structural change in the organisation.

### *Testing Options*

According to all planners interviewed, one of the most significant institutional changes that occurred as a result of the GEPAM project, or that was legitimized by the existence of the project, or mandated by it, or catalyzed by it, was the creation and institutionalization of the SPPPA. Planners' opinions about the success of this change are divided. When discussions about the proposal for the GEPAM project began in 1998, it was noted that a new structure would be needed to accomplish all of the actions to be undertaken in the WPA. Until this time, the Department of Urban Management (DGU) at SEMASA (the municipal public infrastructure provision and engineering agency) was responsible for the area. As activities in the area increased however, and the planners became more acutely aware of the magnitude of needs of managing the region, it became apparent that a permanent regional management office was necessary. Some

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<sup>159</sup> Some speculate that this is because of the physical separation of the area, the fact that it was not at the time viewed as politically important (having fewer active voters residing in the area), not prioritized by the municipal budgeting process (not having an active chapter of representatives for the councils because of being in an area where any development activity was prohibited), and off limits because of restrictive federal laws on watershed protection.

interviewees working in the WPA prior to the creation of the SPPPA noted that they had experienced great difficulty getting infrastructure support, etc., from the PMSA. Also, the physical separation between the urban area and the WPA meant that planners were constantly travelling back and forth every time something was required from the central office.

The municipal bylaw and administrative reform creating the SPPPA was both a strategic management move and a politically significant action. Although legally a Secretariat and placed at the same level of hierarchy in the overall PMSA structure, the SPPPA is responsible for all aspects of municipal service delivery in the SPPPA management area (roughly contiguous with the WPA,) making it the only Secretariat with a geographic scope. Consequently, the office operates as a miniature municipal government, with its own hierarchical management structure. This sometimes leads to conflicts of jurisdiction regarding decisions made by the SPPPA that do not agree with those made in other departments in the PMSA.

After collecting as much data about the watershed and its residents as possible, planners put together a CD-ROM of information about the WPA. Planners at the PMSA were trained through GEPAM in the use of GIS, and created a database of information. What was not implemented at this stage was a review of the comprehensiveness of existing data sources, or a new monitoring strategy for the continued measurement of key variables expected to be affected over the course of the project, or a project to involve residents in participatory monitoring. After the creation of the CD-ROM, it was not possible to implement the GIS system at a municipal wide level, and existing information could not be combined with other sources. This was attributed to incompatible software, and insufficient resources to purchase newer software for the entire land use planning department.

Some interviewees indicated that they learned new techniques and ways of doing things, but were unable to translate these into sustained change in the organisation, because of a lack of resources allocated to purchasing the necessary software. Several also cited existing structural dissonance within the PMSA. For example, land use planning technicians are located in what they feel to be an isolated department with low levels of agency for decision making, where they perceive a lack of transparency in the organisation's activities and feel often that information is withheld from them. This has inhibited some possibilities for the translation of learning to change beyond the daily practices of individuals, into the transformative or structural change these interviewees feel was necessary. Most of the staff working in the land use planning office are tenured civil servants, which contributes to their low levels of agency within the organisation, and also possibly to their lack of motivation to pursue organisational change. Personal disagreements and intra-organisational politics have been cited by interviewees as reasons for this department's disengagement from GEPAM. This has been mentioned by many interviewees as a common motivating or constraining factor, though it is never brought up in team meetings between departments or in written reports. Personal relationships between managers and perceived levels of departmental agency and control over, or ownership of certain aspects of the project are highly relevant to sustained departmental involvement in the project, as well as to the amount of time devoted to an individual or a department's participation and the value placed upon it.

Training in a range of planning methods and tools to be implemented through GEPAM was undertaken over the course of the project. These have included conflict resolution, Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) classification, Social Impact Assessment, Gender Analysis, Participatory Planning Methods, and more. Due to the structure of funding available through the project, training was generally implemented in short, intense workshop sessions where visiting Canadian professionals presented ideas to the Brazilian teams before collaboratively brainstorming to determine the possibilities and relevance of adaptations of the



skills, techniques, models and examples presented. Tool books, guides, reference papers, presentation and training materials were translated and provided for the participants, as well as becoming part of the GEPAM library.

Planners have experienced some difficulty organising and maintaining this reference library. Many different people and departments are involved in managing small aspects of the project, and departments and staff have changed many times over the years. A centrally accessible, well-organised library of resources has never been maintained effectively. While some individuals were exposed to training during workshops and had sufficient agency to determine themselves whether to incorporate elements of learning outcomes from workshops into daily practice, there was no formal institutionalization process. This means that learning may have been lost over time through fading institutional memory, through staff or priority changes, or due simply to a lack of agency or will among planners to incorporate learning into practice for a variety of personal, political or other reasons. Interviewees who began working at the PMSA after particular training or workshop sessions had occurred, or who did not participate in them, often noted that they were unaware of learning outcomes or available training materials.

Interviewees noted that outside constraints often prevented the effective institutionalization of learning from the workshops, such as for example, a lack of resources or existing legal restraints on implementing the findings of things such as the ESA classification.<sup>160</sup> Many project initiatives, such as the charette process, lacked necessary resources or faced significant bureaucratic constraints to their implementation but were nonetheless able to contribute to notable individual learning for those planners and community members involved. This learning was manifest in new technical skills and new understandings of the issue of people living in informal settlements in environmentally sensitive areas. Learning was also notable through an increase in interdisciplinary group interaction, and the use of participatory design processes. Several interviewees noted that while tools like charettes provided useful training exercises for planners and architects, they felt the process had neglected the importance of listening to community members about their needs for settlement design. This, some suggested, would have ultimately affected the community members' willingness to go along with implementation of the charette results. In this case, it was noted that community members held different views from planners in terms of security and what that would look like in settlement design (community members say they feel more comfortable living in separate units and are afraid of apartment dwellings with interior corridors.) In other cases however, this was not as much of an issue, and some design projects were undertaken successfully without significant community consultation. For example, in one community, an innovative infrastructure upgrading project was undertaken for slope consolidation, and deemed successful by both community members and planners. Once completed, the project provided effective learning models for engineers and architects for drainage solutions in landslide risk areas. These two examples represent the variety of learning about practice that occurred at the individual level that were sometimes able to be institutionalized, and other times not able to leverage change at a higher level. Certainly, recognition of the factors enabling or constraining the effective institutionalization of these learning is valuable for future endeavours.

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<sup>160</sup> The findings of the ESA classification pointed to a need to provide adequate housing for people to be moved out of high risk, highly sensitive areas, a need to implement conflict resolution to deal with issues of people being upset about potential relocation, and a need to redo analysis at a larger scale for greater detail in order to make better informed decisions about the placement of boundaries, etc., as the original classification was only completed at a regional scale.

GEPAM's promotion of community involvement in decisions about local land use GEPAM in the WPA has in some cases had extremely positive results. This has multiplied to the active inclusion of community members in infrastructure upgrading led by professionals from the SPPPA (who also provide materials for the works.) This can be tied to the tradition of self-help in building and infrastructure upgrading in Brazil, called 'mutirões', where a group of community members get together to help build a house, fix a road, or install a pipe – similar to the north American tradition of a barn raising. The positive outcomes of group interaction and learning associated with these activities have stimulated the creation of another program where residents from all over the WPA participate in training and professional certification for home building. In this program, participants learn skills for work and gain confidence in their abilities to learn. The success of this program is visible in the notable benefits and changes in planner-community relations. Consequently, it has been institutionalized as a new practice at the PMSA. This is an example of structural level change with a close relationship to change and learning at the transformative level of relationships.

The evolution of various approaches, from ESA classification, to design charette, to infrastructure upgrading involving community consultation, to infrastructure upgrading that involves community participation in decision making, to community involvement and government response in the planning of and provision of supplies for 'mutirões' demonstrates the ongoing learning process and increasing community involvement occurring at the level of daily practice in the PMSA. Greater community involvement however, does not always signal more community control, greater government accountability or better development. There is a fine line between encouraging participation for the promotion of stronger community, civil society and greater liveability, and using it instrumentally to build support and assistance to initiatives undertaken to promote primarily the best interests of the state. With respect to this, learning or change at the level of practical structure might reflect an acquired knowledge from an individual or relationships practical level that is not necessarily in accordance with higher-level organisational goals, or the goals of the learning project.

#### *Evaluating the organisation*

As the GEPAM project had been an important enabling factor in the creation of the SPPPA, which brought much needed services to the WPA, some planners noted that they felt the GEPAM project should play a role in what they perceived as the necessary restructuring of the SPPPA, so that those planners more directly involved with community members could have greater input into the organisation's functioning. The following comments illustrate the range of learning associated with the establishment of the SPPPA. Firstly, the SPPPA was a way of bringing services closer to communities,

“We established the office to have our presence felt in the area.... so that we could be accessible to meet people's needs, so that we could learn what they were”

Many interviewees also attributed the creation of the SPPPA to a raised political profile of the WPA, brought about initially by the GEPAM project, “the project was high profile and so it mandated us to pay attention to the area,” and,

“The WPA gained a political and strategic importance and the SPPPA was created.... It was the movement provoked in the population, the needs revealed by SEMASA and also the importance of all the protected area. Today, I feel that the project isn't only about tecnicos, but it has been for a long time at the management level, and we here at the direct interaction with population level, we have less knowledge of activities, access to exchange....”

Several interviewees, notably not department heads or directors of Secretariats, indicated that they felt that the structure of the GEPAM model was somewhat restrictive. One interviewee suggested the difficulties of the model were not inherent to its structure, but surfaced in its implementation, depending on the leadership and particular management styles used, "...the problem is not with the management model, but the way that it is used."

In summary, the interviewees highlighted the following practical learning and changes at the levels of individual daily practices, relationships and structures and processes of the PMSA organisation.

The presence of key people as ideas champions is vital to the rapid implementation of innovative projects, as they often possess the leverage necessary to change relationships, structures and processes in the institution. This is indicative of individual learning. New skills, while useful in data collection, analysis, and modelling, can be difficult to institutionalize due to constraints such as land-use conflicts, lack of financial resources, lack of existing infrastructure to support use of new software or tools, and the lack of a structured project to train people on use of new tools. This is indicative of individual learning that failed to leverage structural change or changes in relationships due to existing constraints. Exposure to new ways of thinking can lead to new individual knowledge, but implementing this in institutional structure, or having it change relationship structures are more difficult tasks to accomplish. The practical learning of some individuals, can be contrary to larger goals of organisation, and can easily become entrenched. This is indicative of change resulting from acquisition that is not necessarily reflective of learning. Also, key individuals hold knowledge that might disappear if they leave the organisation. Individual learning therefore should be institutionalized in some way.

With regards to practical learning about structured relationships, community inclusion at the early stages of project development can lend a sense of ownership, and make participants feel more respected. This can lead to better, more collaborative processes, but it is not by necessity institutionalized into the structure of the organisation. Practical changes in relationship structures can represent learning, but careful reflection is necessary. New relationships between planners and community are built by interaction through GEPAM activities. Community members noted changes in relations with planners during involvement in GEPAM development phase, though this is not noted by planners or sustained over time. This increased interaction can lead to changes in practices and values, but needs to be institutionalized and reviewed to ensure continuity and avoid the risks of instrumentalization. Also, a lack of definition of community membership due to transience, no tenure, low willingness to participate, and the nature of participatory processes used inhibited the ability of planners to implement some actions effectively. Some planners feel they must support transformative learning in relations between planners and community members to resolve this, though accomplishing this task bottom up is difficult. A general recognition exists among interviewees of the non-readiness of certain community members, concurrent with a lack of structures for adequate training for participatory forums such as capacity building for individuals. Interviewees suggest creating time for this task is difficult because of the transience of some residents of the WPA populations, as well as because of the perception of the organisation's limited resources including time, money, and personnel. Finally, some interviewees felt that their professional connection to the project was weak, because it was not promoted by their department managers, or not valued by other participating planners. Many of them also felt their input was not valued. Some suggested they could use the tools provided through the project much more effectively if they had the agency to implement them into the structure of the organisation, or even the opportunity to offer feedback to other planners about their usefulness or not, or to suggest their own professional needs. Many interviewees suggested

this weakness was closely tied to the issue of conflict between technical and politically appointed staff in the PMSA. The following quote illustrates these feelings of dis-inclusion and perceived barriers by one technical planner.

“You are the first person who has ever asked me to talk about GEPAM activities...as coordinator... forgets to talk with the operational and technical staff, and only deals with the upper management. I think the coordinator should work with the team at all levels, to listen to all participants because sometimes it is the smallest member who can provide the idea for the solution to the problem.... sometimes the tecnicos can't see it, only the cleaning people, or the interns.”

In the area of practical learning at the levels of structures and practices of the organisation, interviewees noted the following. Structures for information gathering and area management are necessary and were created. They were not, however, re-evaluated or continually monitored – their institutionalization has been limited. Some interviewees cited an overabundance of formal structure leading to restrictive bureaucracy and making residents feel more disconnected from the government than they originally were. They also suggest that it allows government to hide behind administrative red tape. Once again, careful reflection and continued monitoring of the structural change implemented have not been institutionalized. Many participatory activities have also been created, amplified and institutionalized, but not explicitly reflected on. The depth and value of participation and its results and implications for people's lives through this are not clear in this area. Outside constraints on planning activity have also been cited, as municipal planners do not have the power to effectively change what happens at the state level, and the state can still override the municipal government in many areas. Planners, by engaging in the long process of empowering the community are strengthening the leverage of civil society as well as increasing the community's resilience and ability to adapt changes they cannot stop from happening. This task is made more difficult by the fact that much of the community is transient and not connected to place, and so attempting a longer process of empowerment is not always effective.<sup>161</sup> Many innovative projects for livelihood generation have been developed and implemented, involving training projects, workshops and seminars. Their effectiveness is still constrained however, both by the clientelistic service delivery model through which they are provided, and by the absence of access to markets. For communities, participation does not yet include involvement in planning for participation in sustainable livelihoods. The government also experiences difficulties in its attempts to implement long-range development goals with a limited term in office and a need to prioritise tangible positive outcomes, to support chances at re-election. Planners did not feel sufficiently empowered to offer their suggestions about restructuring the GEPAM project and reorganizing how the tools or workshops were delivered, including citizen participation at a deeper level within the activities and decision making processes. Institutional space for reflection, and valuing reflection and criticism does not yet exist in the organisation.

Generally, most of what was learned at the level of practical skills and knowledge, while often acquired and understood easily and rapidly by planners and community members, was difficult to institutionalize into sustained change, unless a particular planner had a great deal of agency in the organisation to do so. Also, those things that were learned were not necessarily in accordance with the overall goals of the organisation, but because they were often acquired and not made explicit as policy, they became entrenched more easily.

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<sup>161</sup> From personal interviews, 2003

### 5.3 VALUES TRANSFORMATIONS: concepts of citizenship and participation

In this section, transformative learning through substantive shifts in values and beliefs at the levels of the individual, structured relationships and the structures and processes of the organisation are examined. Rather than attempt to examine all of the different values transformations that did, or had the potential to occur in the organisation, the analysis focuses specifically on the example of values transformation about citizen participation in planning. This direct democratic participation is a central aspect of the political mandate of the PMSA, as well as of the GEPAM project. This section of analysis begins with a brief overview of two relevant theorist-practitioners' work in the area of structures of citizen participation and the ways in which meaning and value are connected with them, in order to provide context. Following this, specific structural shifts demonstrating transformative values or created to promote transformed relations in the PMSA and between PMSA planners and community members are discussed, using the examples of strategic planning processes and councils of local representatives. Then, an examination of individual transformations in values expressed by planners is discussed, followed by the transformation of relationships occurring through these structures. A clear foundation is thus laid out to explain how the transformation of values inherent in organisational structures is connected to transformations in individual values and how this plays out in the arena of structured relationships both in intra-organisational interaction and between planners and community members.

Gaventa provides an informative and relevant discussion of developments in theory about participatory structures in local government and transformative learning. In relating the concept of participation to the exercise of citizenship rights and democratic governance, he suggests a movement towards decentralised governance and the intersection of participation and citizenship.<sup>162</sup> Gaventa suggests that often in development contexts where poor people interact with governance institutions, these institutions are relatively free from accountability to the people with which they have relations. This can contribute to low levels of confidence among people about the institution. Gaventa also states that strengthening participation simply by giving greater "voice" to the poor, does not solve this issue of low accountability, but that connecting this voice to an accountable and responsible body of governance may be possible through restructuring institutional design.<sup>163</sup>

As is demonstrated in the following quote, with regards to GEPAM and the PMSA, the benefits of transformation are clearly indicated, not only in the ways active citizenship is valued,

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<sup>162</sup> Gaventa (2003) defines citizenship, in drawing on Lister (1997) as a *practice*, "to be a citizen in the legal and sociological sense means to enjoy the rights of citizenship necessary for agency and social and political participation. To act as a citizen involves fulfilling the potential of that status." This is notably distinct from what he calls a more traditional liberal view of citizenship, limited to "individual legal equality accompanied by a set of rights and responsibilities and bestowed by a state to its citizens." The central difference is the way in which citizenship is an *action* to be exercised that links participation in political, community and social spheres, as opposed to a *state* carrying rights and responsibilities that can be enacted or not independently of one another. In the Brazilian context, to be a citizen means various things, sometimes to hold registration papers, other times property. One of the planners involved in this research suggested that he felt the full citizenship rights of the populations living in the watershed protection area were compromised unfairly because of systemic injustices of inequality of income distribution.

<sup>163</sup> Gaventa, John. "Towards Participatory Local Governance: Assessing the Transformative Possibilities." Paper prepared for the Conference on Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation. Manchester, February 27-28, 2003.

but also for the ways in which its exercise happens through structured relationships and is structured by the processes of the project and the organisation.

“As participatory approaches are scaled up from projects to policies, they inevitably enter the arenas of government, and find that participation can only become effective as it engages with the issues of institutional change. And, as concerns about good governance and state responsiveness grow, questions about how citizens engage and make demands on the state also come to the fore.”<sup>164</sup>

Gaventa also highlights the important conception of “the agency of citizens as makers and shapers rather than as users and choosers of interventions or services designed by others” In his typology of spaces for participation, he suggests that the power of participation is related to “how they [the spaces] were created and with whose interests and what terms of engagement” These spaces can be closed or provided, invited, or claimed/created. In closed or provided space, a group of elites make decisions and provide services, based on their conceptions of the needs of the citizenry. In invited space, an institution invites participation according to a regularized form, retaining some power over the process and its outcomes. In claimed or created space, citizens reject a hegemonic space and create their own, often with membership being identity or issue based. Claimed or created spaces are ‘organic spaces which emerge out of sets of common concerns or identifications.... may come into being as a result of popular mobilization, such as around identity or issue-based concerns, or may consist of spaces in which like-minded people join together in common pursuits.” “Closed spaces may seek to restore legitimacy by creating invited spaces; similarly, invited spaces may be created from the other direction, as more autonomous peoples movements attempt to use their own fora for engagement with the state. Similarly, power gained in one space, through new skills, capacity and experiences, can be used to enter and affect other spaces.” Gaventa notes that when looking at issues of participation, it is essential to remember the roots and reasons for a space, and how it interrelates with other spaces.<sup>165</sup> This relates directly to some of the occurrences in the arena of popular participation that have happened in the WPA over the course of the GEPAM project.

Complementary to this is Rebecca Abers’ introduction to her study of the participatory budgeting process in Porto Alegre, involving the exercise of citizen rights through direct democratic participation in government. She refers to Denis Goulet’s (1989) discussion of participation in development projects and the concept of ‘instrumental’ participation, where an invited channel of participation is offered by the state to achieve policy goals more effectively. Abers discusses how in her view, structures created for participation in direct democracy lead to empowerment by increasing the condition of citizen control (access to decision processes and to the state) as well as increasing individual political development (through access to and practice in the exercise of new skills and knowledges.) Noted by Abers however, “participatory policies differ according to who is invited to participate, the tasks participants are engaged in, and the decision making power that participants have.”<sup>166</sup>

Abers also discusses the issue of ‘obstacles’ to participation – namely, implementation (because not everyone necessarily agrees or understands all concepts similarly, or some fear backlash or unintended consequences, or have conflicting personal motivations) and inequality (where the already marginalised get re-marginalised because of their differential access to

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<sup>164</sup> Gaventa, 2003:2

<sup>165</sup> Gaventa, 2003.

<sup>166</sup> Abers, Rebecca Neaera. Inventing Local Democracy: Grassroots Politics in Brazil. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1997. 5

channels of participation, their limited capacities to understand the issues and participate effectively, and the higher levels of efficacy of experienced participants – who effectively become the new elites, or ‘professional participants.’ A third obstacle, that of co-optation is also discussed, and these three types of obstacles are said to be interrelated, so that leveraging or counteracting one will effectively bolster another. The question that Abers seeks to answer in her work here is whether the state can promote broad civil society empowerment.<sup>167</sup> This is highly relevant in the context of the PMSA and the GEPAM project. In the following quote from a planner, it is suggested that the structural change in practice of implementing the SPPPA resulted in a lessened potential for, or reversed a previously held informal organisational approach to participation. In other words, the practical structural change of creating the SPPPA served to leverage change and learning that resulted in instrumentalization of participation through values transformations at the levels of individual values and structured relationships.

“Before the SPPPA, the government had a greater, closer relationship with the community and it brought great learning opportunities for people...we had lots of groups developing activities, lots of presence....it’s not too clear exactly why, but participation has been emptied of value...the people that were originally working with GEPAM changed and the profile changed I think...”

Recognising the difficulties of values transforming processes involves awareness that when entering into a discussion of ideas of active relationships or structures for citizenship and participation, once again the individual values both of planners and of citizens have a significant effect on how relations work, what space is provided and how it is structured, and how this affects the choices citizens make to engage and in what ways. One of the central values of the PT party is active citizen participation in local governance, often through processes such as participatory budgeting, or notable in Santo André, the Cidade Futuro long range community visioning process that contributes to the city’s master plan.<sup>168</sup> The assertion of citizenship rights through active participation in the channels of local governance is an important driving force for values transformation and organisational change through the GEPAM project. From the individual to the structural level through the project it has undergone significant change in character, functionality, and leverage. With respect to this, Santo André’s council of representatives is here examined as a structure for values transformations, across which individual values can shift and relationships be transformed.

Local *conselhos*, or councils of representatives,<sup>169</sup> were created in Santo André, including recently in the WPA, to provide a participatory forum for citizens to interact with government.

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<sup>167</sup> Abers, 1997: 8-10

<sup>168</sup> PMSA. *Cidade Futuro*. 2003.

<sup>169</sup> The council of representatives is made up of 14 members of the community, 4 of which are elected, others being appointed to first council after being identified as local leaders, etc. It also comprises 14 members of the SPPPA. Everyone gets one vote. Effectively, decisions can be accepted or rejected by SPPPA (ie accepted and not acted on, or denied, etc.) The council has a written constitution, and established rules that were determined through participatory process.). Councils engage in bimonthly meetings to discuss issues of community concern, to explain projects the government is initiating. Various councils exist in the WPA. There is the initial council of representatives, as well as additional councils for issues specific to Paranapiacaba, and Parque Andreense, and councils for specific issues such as community economic development, health, etc. This channel of participation is an invited space, where the dynamic can generally be conceived of as government providing responses to community questions, taking complaints, reclamations, etc. Although the chair rotates, it often involves questions directed directly towards the local head administrator.

Within the SPPPA, councils of representatives have effectively replaced GEPAM forums as a primary channel for citizen -government communication. According to one SPPPA planner,

“Today we have a *conselho* of representatives that was formed by my management office which is extremely participatory.... from the point of view of participation of the population, it got better and the condition of accompanying GEPAM in all things somehow just faded away, was substituted by the councils.”

The question raised by this assertion is how much does this represent the effective institutionalization of a value shift for greater citizen participation in local decision-making, and how much it is the instrumentalization of participation. Interestingly, the councils of representatives in the WPA have an active counterpart in informal spaces created, often by council members, to discuss strategies for acting in council, based on issue or identity politics. Some citizens, dissatisfied with the functioning of what Gaventa calls *invited spaces* for participation acting as enabling forums for the *closed spaces*, are creating and using *open spaces* where they actively plan their responses and discuss issues to bring up to gain more effective leverage in the invited spaces.<sup>170</sup> All three community councils of representatives in the WPA have at least one informal counterpart, where small groups of members meet to discuss their understandings of the government's position, and perceived bargaining potential.

“The discourse of the powerless in spaces created by the powerful may be very different from that in the spaces of resistance they create for themselves.”<sup>171</sup>

Members of the most recently formed council of representatives said that their relationships of trust with the government are growing, but that they maintain their own space in which to discuss how to address what the government brings them, how to deal with their own communities, and how to respond or use the existing channels of government participation effectively. One member of a created groups said that the existence of the formal council of representative provided them with the idea and the incentive to seek out knowledge of other government councils in comparison, in order to get a better idea of whether their rights were being met or not. This particular group has since gone on to mobilize other members of the community, and engages in regular community teaching and empowerment activities, ranging from literacy to citizenship rights, to functioning of legal tenure rights, etc. Changing leadership in the group also provides the opportunity for new members to learn confidence with the groups support, in their interactions with the government.

Likely an unintended consequence of the perception among community members that invited space works as a channel of dissemination for a government that makes many of its important decisions in private closed space, the created spaces of the informal citizens groups are an effective means to some degree both of empowerment, and of inclusion of the most marginalised members of society. Examples of this include the Paranapiacaba alternative community group, of whom many members are active council members, or the women's group in Parque Andreense, which predates the local council, but engage in it and many other invited spaces of the government, while always making sure to engage in their own space to discuss the goings on of the invited space. These groups face issues in their lack of formal structure or protocol, as well as in their lack of direct connection to the apparatus of the state, though participating council members do a great deal to bring information relevant to the group to

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<sup>170</sup> Gaventa, 2003.

<sup>171</sup> Gaventa (drawing on James Scott) 2003:11



attention. Also, the built trust that can exist between members of both these councils and the local government gives them greater leverage with key decision makers in both groups.<sup>172</sup>

In the case of all 3 pilot projects of GEPAM, an informally created community interest group meets in an attempt to coordinate and instrumentalize their participation in the invited space provided by the government to achieve greater leverage for their interests. The government, in turn, meets outside of the invited space to brief and control what they will present, reveal to the council members, or how they will respond to their demands. The system is used by both sides to reinforce a certain client/patron relation. The council members, some of whom have been named to the position by government, demonstrate concern for the other residents' well being, and try to represent their views, but often these seem to be secondary to the individual concerns of the council member. Greater accountability of council members and of government to council, as well as decision making on more substantive issues, or shared decision making about what the substantive issues to be decided are, would be extremely valuable to the groups. A structural change, such as implementation of a voting system would effectively do this, but for the fact that most relations between community members can often be somewhat clientelistic and the privilege of being a council member effectively places a resident in a position of power among other community members. Overall, finding a way to build in greater responsiveness and accountability in the official forums is a next step.

According to several community members, many of the constraints on participation and its effectiveness have to do with structural issues, such as basic accessibility or at a higher level, perceived usefulness of participation. Often, forums for participation are presented to the communities to engage in activities such as community gardening, nutrition or arts workshops, or job skills training projects, what the government feels will be empowering. While community

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<sup>172</sup> A good example of this is presented by the case of Paranapiacaba. In 2002, residents of the village of Paranapiacaba, feeling a great deal of fear in relation to the recent purchase of the village by the municipality and the risk of removal from the houses they were living in (which they perceived to be rightfully their homes, though the government had legally purchased them from the railway company and was in the process of instituting a rent system for some of them, while choosing to vacate others for restoration to serve as part of their heritage tourism infrastructure or public use), combined with a lack of understanding of government power in relation to tenure over the houses, decision making for heritage tourism development plan, decided to form an alternative community group to mount an action against the area secretariat at the state level (?) in an attempt to maintain the right to live in the houses. The group was made up of diverse residents, some of them local council members, others members of other community groups, still others residents who had never been involved in any contact with the government, effectively marginalised because of their lack of motivation to participate in any projects or services offered by the government. Concerned residents who had observed that these most marginalised residents were at the earliest risk of being removed from the village for their inability to pay rent, or achieve discounts for participation in development projects since they did not interact with the government, had tried to mobilize them and encourage them to interact in the open space, with hopes that they would be able to gain community support in some form. The group although initially effective at mobilizing, experienced some internal disputes about leadership, the stance they would take, and the legal justification for this stance, and was thus unable to effectively achieve the action they desired. One member of the group suggested in fact that it may have contributed to greater confusion as some information was distorted or misunderstood before retransmission to the group. This was also noted to occur in relation to key members, or agitators in the group. The group does however continue to provide a space where council members discuss and relate to others the implications of government policies, the issues discussed at council.

members often view these as interesting, they also sometimes perceive a lack of usefulness or connection to meeting basic livelihood needs, which are of very high concern.<sup>173</sup>

One way of understanding the implications of the insurgent councils and the lack of interest in government provided activities is to consider the hypothesis that through GEPAM activities, government is actively *creating community* – i.e. neighbourhood councils, local mapping, participatory activities, participatory budgeting – in places where often no real strong community feeling pre-existed, and in some cases, those people who can, and do perceive the benefits or even just follow for lack of something else to do, are joining the projects, reappearing in all activities, forming a community – so that participants are often the same and the government fails to engage a broad spectrum of community members. Also, the way in which the government pursues community formation may be adversely affecting the communities' ability to operate self-sufficiently.

One interviewee described how their values transformation about participation has been shifting over the course of the GEPAM project. As demonstrated in the quote's description of collaboration (listening to community needs before making decisions authoritatively) however, the boundary between effective participation and perpetuation of clientelism remains unclear. As the interviewee notes, the organisation may be increasingly encouraging participation, but the value of this movement in addressing entrenched views about the appropriate role and authority of city staff vs. community participants continues to be a difficult issue.

“It is the municipal council with the communities of the favela organizing, the population of Paranapiacaba reclaiming, this existence of the mobilization of the population, their demanding, asserting of rights is something that was facilitated by GEPAM. Now we work a lot with community participation, listening to their needs and suggestions where before it was a system more of trading favours. So the entire process of how things are done has changed, but none of these things are written down because it has been more about how attitudes change, how ideas are taken in a more constructive way, and less about other stuff. We are shifting from clientelism to a collaborative model of planning...”

Perhaps more careful recording of experiences and implications of changes and reflection would be useful in evaluating the effectiveness and true nature of participation in this, as in other cases.

#### *Transformations in Individual Values*

During early stages of GEPAM, interviewees suggested that the conceptions among planners about issues in the WPA were very technical. Many felt that if information could be effectively and efficiently gathered and analysed, it would be possible to come up with solutions to all management issues, failing to recognise the difficulties they might face in trying to include citizens in the planning process. While interviewees alluded to complexities of the issue which may have involved conceptualisation of people living in the area as a problem factor, but the central issue remains, protecting the watershed, and not promoting active participation for liveability in the watershed. For some planners, GEPAM promoted significant transformation in values among individual planners and structures of the organisation in terms of highlighting environmental protection issues. This was not the case with all planners. Some, at various points

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<sup>173</sup> For example, several community members noted their reluctance to participate in a training project for becoming an environmental monitor because while now that there are 42 trained and certified monitors, there is no market yet for all of them to make a living.

through the project, also realised that there were many factors internal to the communities, external to their jurisdiction, or in the larger societal problem leading to the informal settlements in the first place that were significant constraints on their abilities as an organisation to effectively manage the area with direct citizen participation, and that part of this was a problem because they were conceptualising settlement in the area as something they needed to stop. Gradually, the people came to recognise that what would be most appropriate would be a way to conscientize citizens and minimize damage by empowering them to help deal with unstoppable forces, and providing means for people to participate in things like livelihood generation for living sustainably in the WPA. The following is an example of an interviewee explaining the difficulties of value transformation in relations between planners and community members, in terms of moving beyond providing spaces for participation, to helping build capacity for collective self-empowerment, "it is complicated to help people see what they can do, how to change their lives. How can, for example, someone trained as a gardener learn to take it further, to move the whole group farther..."

At the personal level, some interviewees feel they have experienced transformative learning, and that this affects what kinds of practical changes they support in terms of structures, skills, and relations. Many planners indicate a new valuation of community input, and knowledge. This is evident in the changing discourse here demonstrated by a compilation of one planner's changing views over the course of the project,

"We are trying to protect the area...they have no rights to live there and are damaging the environment... we are trying to meet their basic needs and educate them about environmental protection...we are trying to help them learn about their rights.... we are trying to help them meet livelihood needs sustainably...we are trying to train them, we are trying to help them learn how to decide what to do with their training to find income."

Not all value transformations have been positive however. Some planners are learning to instrumentalize participation, and are acting, perhaps unknowingly, to disempower spaces offered for participation, or limit the empowerment potentials of various activities. Very few interviewees indicated a consciousness of any newly acquired practices related to transformative values. Those that did, stressed them as positive learning in all cases. Several planners even suggested that clientelistic structures of service delivery were 'participatory' because community members were able to offer input and ideas that were then considered, and decided upon by planners.

"Participation is important to ensure that people agree with what we are doing, and that things get done"

"The organisation never says yes right away, or no [to demands brought up in council meetings]. We listen to their demands, and then we think about it and bring them a response."

Several planners noted awareness of the differential treatment of ideas coming from community members versus from planners.

"There are always barriers if someone in the community has an idea. If the idea comes from the organisation, it can be pushed through easily."

### *Value Transformations in Organisational Structures*

Within the organisation, relationships transformed significantly, due in large part to the new structure of local government imposed by the SPPPA. The working environment of the SPPPA has been characterized by the planners working there as fast paced, innovative, challenging, always learning and changing and incorporating new practices, and responsive and adaptive to the needs of the area. They have characterized the PMSA as slower paced, bogged down by administrative complications. It is interesting to note that this can be viewed both as a strength and a weakness of the new management body. As a strength, the SPPPA management team is a small group of planners who know each other well and function efficiently, keenly aware of each other's strengths and specializations and drawing on them in their daily interactions. They are also adept at picking up new skills and techniques. The SPPPA office encourages management staff to attend conferences, learning exchanges and take courses whenever possible to increase their capabilities. They often engage in learning by doing things they have never done before, though reflection is a limited part of this process. They experience a lot of pressure to perform, and to do so quickly. Change happens, and it happens fast in the SPPPA. This is their strength and also their weakness. The pace of development is so rapid that often things get overlooked, such as the value of a full Social Impact Assessment before beginning a development project in Paranapiacaba,<sup>174</sup> or taking the time for the institution to reflect on its actions beyond simply evaluating whether they were successful or not, to look for reasons why certain unexpected outcomes happened, to characterize their learning and to record the techniques and approaches they consider successful, in case at some point a new member should come along, or in the event that the government does not get re-elected, to leave some sort of a learning legacy in the hopes that the community will not be abandoned by the next administration.

Since its inception in 2000, the functional structure of the SPPPA has not changed. The practices used by the planners have been adapted, and new things have been incorporated, but in general, it has remained the same. One interviewee noted that the hierarchical structure of reporting in the SPPPA makes it difficult for higher-level management to know if problems are occurring at lower levels because middle management quashes any hints of non-success, or error. This is recently being usurped, noted this interviewee, as higher levels of management begin to actively seek out lower level staff to ask for observations.

It was noted by several planners that reluctance exists to discuss failure, or difficulty when questioned by a superior, or when reporting on a project (what some termed a tradition in Brazilian practice). This is supported by the suggestion of a common conception among Latin American participants in development projects that monitoring or evaluation is a disciplinarian means of 'checking up' to see if things are working or not, and that the standard response should always be yes to avoid punishment, or having services taken away.

Several interviewees made comments about the difficulty of functioning with no clear notion of to whom one was responsible in certain objectives of the GEPAM project. Project supervisors, fiscal managers, pilot project coordinators, and planners involved in daily implementation all have duties to report on progress and lessons learned at various stages to the funder. Outside of this reporting, which is accompanied by a strategic planning session series, it is unclear how monitoring of projects activities actually occurs.

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<sup>174</sup> Opinions are diverse about heritage development activities in Paranapiacaba. They range from support for the recreation of the most english brazilian village, to dismay at the lack of inclusion of community members in decision making for development plans and relocation of residents out of houses that have become PMSA property.

In terms of relations between planners and community members, a lack of direct relation between planners and community members was noted by some planners.

“They sit in their office and do not interact with the community”

“The population reclaimed for promises made.... it was the tecnicos problem because they were meeting in the paço, not with the population, or with those staff directly connected to them... something was forgotten.... I complained but – said no, this is how it works....[eventually] things were modified because the population was pissed because they had been promised the formation of an accompaniment group and it never happened...I thought this was a very serious thing because participation as I understood it in the project was supposed to not only be a technology transfer from university to tecnicos, but from tecnicos to population, and from population to tecnicos to university. Today I understand how this happens, but at the time, I thought the population was being sidelined....”

Conversely, other planners, including directors and department heads, expressed satisfaction with the existing management model.

“We created the structure of the SPPPA to meet specific needs and it works, so it continues unchanged. New practices are evaluated and modified when needed.”

“When someone brings me an idea I reflect on it and then decide if it should be taken to a higher level”

“The WPA today is a focus of attention, until 1997 it was ignored, didn’t even show up on the map, but now it has an important symbolism and it is important because of the planners preoccupation with it, of the mayor’s preoccupation. No longer is it viewed as a problem to deal with, but now as a strategic preoccupation, about the future path of the city...and in this GEPAM was fundamental – the technical cooperation, the exchange with Canada really gave the WPA a step up in political terms, a distinguishing mark that placed it centrally on the political agenda....”

Other planners viewed maintaining distance and withholding information from community not as lack of transparency, but as protection of the planning organisation’s interests, of minimizing potential conflict,

“We cannot tell them the whole plan until we are sure it will happen – there is no need to worry them unnecessarily”

or suggested fears of raising expectations to unmatchable levels,

“They warned us that their demands would only increase if we provided them with support...”

Beyond these several exceptions, most planners and community members indicated overall optimism and a growing confidence between community and government combined with movement away from clientelistic service delivery. It was noted that this movement was partly due to limited resources of the government to take care of the population, and the necessity of

helping community members become able to care for themselves in terms of livelihood generation.

“Our responsibilities to provide assistance are limited. We cannot carry the process all the way. We can provide access to tools, but do not have the resources to give people everything...”

“We have more participants in the training projects than jobs will be available at the end...”

(In reference to the goal of GEPAM) “I think it was to involve people more in figuring out how to participate...and as demonstrated by the council of representatives fighting us so much, I think this has been attained. Now, it is training the population so they are more empowered to figure out what they want, to understand how things we do really work, so they will be less contrary...”

It was also noted on some occasions that change had occurred in relationships, through amplification of participatory projects offered to community members that morphed into more highly developed projects.

“Our relationship has changed. The first year they were just informally getting some cash for watching the cars, then the second year they got vests and were the parking attendants. Now they have been formed into an association, trained and certified and they will be the attendants as well as the welcomers to the festival...”

Overall, in terms of values transformations, it is apparent that a great deal of change has occurred among some individuals in relationships and in structures, while the meaning of this change and its implications are less clear. Conscious reflection about shifts in values seems to occur at the individual level, but most planners don't acknowledge how much they incorporate these considerations into their practice. The effectiveness of transformative structures is also hazy, as there are no clearly defined criteria within the organisation for values definition, for example what constitutes good participation, or how it can be achieved, nor for how it can be protected from instrumentalization or tokenism. For transformative structures to be effective, the values they are in place to promote must be clear and shared by the individuals who will hold power over their use. Also, individuals' values must be recorded in some way and reflected upon to see how they relate to organisational goals and if desired, strengthened by the possibility of institutionalization. In this way, shifts in individual values and structures for transformation can work together as key pieces reinforcing transformative learning in the relations among planners, as well as between planners and community members. It is in this central component that lies the power of transformative learning to change the ways in which planning practice happens, and to reinforce citizenship and true participatory democracy.

#### 5.4 META-LEVEL LEARNING: Learning about learning and change

In this section, meta-level learning about the learning and change processes is discussed at the levels of individuals, structured relationships and organisational processes making up the PMSA. Conscious reflection, from a personal to an institutional level is the primary means by which this meta-level understanding is developed.

##### *Meta-level Individual Reflection*

GEPAM is a new learning process for everyone involved. None of the planners, community members, or other partners involved had any previous experience with the GEPAM model, though many of them brought knowledge and experience from other areas to the project. All of the planners involved in this study demonstrated through the interviews that they actively engage in personal reflection, at some level, about their daily practice. Very few indicated that they record these reflections. Those that did noted that there was neither space nor legitimacy in their workday for this recording process. Some, most notably those who were pursuing post-graduate studies, noted the value of such reflections, and expressed concern or remorse for the lack of space for them in the institutional context. The following quotes illustrate this well.

"I reflect on my own.... there is no time in the work day to reflect.... reflection in the workplace is not valued.... reflection in the workplace is viewed as a waste of time.... I am writing my own reflections for my own purposes, but on my own time."

"I wish there was time to reflect...through my university courses I have learned about the value of academic reflection.... I would like to note my reflections but do not have time on my own time...there are lessons worth noting that we have learned in the ways we do things...things that came up in the process that would be worth recording so they are not lost for the next time...."

"I do not feel comfortable bringing up my reflections during planning meetings – I would be ridiculed, people would be exasperated with me, they do not want me to waste their time with reflections, questions about the ways things are done...things are done the way they are because that is the process we started with, and it works...we checked, it works, we still use it...."

In general, planners indicated awareness that a significant amount of their knowledge and of what became daily practice was derived from acquired knowledge, rather than from institutionalized learning processes. Because of this, they suggested that tool books and manuals created as part of the GEPAM project fell short of achieving their intended purposes. The following quotes from planners indicated their reliance on acquisition, over formal learning, for the implementation of new practices.

"I learned how just by being here [in the office]"

"There is no official how-to guide"

"Nobody reads the training manuals"

"The training manual has been re-written 3 times, because people don't know the others exist."

"I do not have to ask to know it would not be acceptable"

#### *Meta-level Reflective Relationships*

In terms of structured relationships, most planners indicated that though in the initial development stages of GEPAM, there was a broad base of participation; there had not been a significant institutionalization of these processes. Due to this, as well as to other perceived constraints of political roles and intra-organisational conflicts, there were few explicit relations existing between planners for reflecting about learning, other than in specific situations, for example according to the desires of a particular department head to "reflect together" (usually a

process of troubleshooting or affirmation for a particular activity.) Rather, most of the learning was structured around checking for effectiveness of practical goals of the project. "We meet once a week to talk about progress and strategy" Structured relationships were understood as situations where planners had to defend their ideas, or argue for transformations in values. "Planners are responsible for defending their ideas, suggestions."

#### *Meta-level Reflective Organisational Processes*

At the structural level of institutionalizing processes for learning about ways in which learning and change were happening in the organisation, planners indicated an awareness of how learning occurred as demonstrated by the following quotes:

"We have learned about the ways in which we learn and change – that is a significant finding",

"Yes, our learning process is not linear. Change is cyclical and happens at multiple levels in multiple ways. We are not always getting better..."

None of the planners could specifically identify the existence of a structure formally institutionalized or acquired to support the learning processes of the organisation. Some however, did mention the GEPAM project as an attempt to institutionalize a set of learnings, and suggested that the project could have been more appropriately structured as a learning process where more leverage for change or adjustments in the functioning of the model could be built in.

"Knowing why things happen does not mean we are capable of changing them"

"We started with the idea that we could create a new, adaptive management model. What we have learned is that this is not as important as understanding how we learn and change as a system – because imposing a model for managing change is less effective than a model that helps us understand how we change – i.e. learning to change vs. learning from change at a higher level"

"We thought what we needed was a new model of adaptive management. What we need is an adaptive model for changing management"

Several interviewees suggested strengthening the learning loops of the institution by creating structures that promoted talking between levels, challenging the hierarchies of access to information, reporting in the project, and institutional memory. Some found it difficult to even admit to mutual learning,

"If you say that you have learned from working with me then I concede that I too have learned from working with you."

Among interviewees there is a raised consciousness of the importance of shared understandings. Overall there is also reflection with regards to multiplying GEPAM to address urban issues too, managing the region and looking at the larger factors that are leading to issues in the WPA. While in the beginning the GEPAM project was a collaboratively created adaptive management plan that sought to promote learning and institutionalize practices, now key actors have realized it may be more appropriate to the goals of the project and the PMSA to try to make it an institutionalization of learning process – build in reflection.



“We learned that our approach was insufficient – that what we had effectively done was impose a new framework – one that had its own built-in feedback loops and would seek to maintain itself rather than a model for change that would respond to a changing environment, changing needs, etc.”

This is however, constrained by political time frame,

“Short political time frame (4 years) means that managers are motivated to get things achieved quickly as well as to create legacies, rather than to engage in more long term development processes.”

Some interviewees view the results driven structure of GEPAM as a good thing. By being required to supply specific purposes, objectives, and results to the funder, and managing based on attaining outputs to achieve outcomes, the organisation is mandated to accomplish certain specific tasks.

## **6. SYNTHESIS**

In this thesis, the PMSA is examined as a planning organisation making a conscious attempt through GEPAM to engage in processes of social learning and reformulate some of the ways in which their organisation functions, with a goal of moving towards better local government. The organisation in this context is a system of flux and transformation, whose character and functioning are highly dependent on the individuals of which it is composed, their structured relationships, and the processes through which they interact with each other and with community members in the practice of planning. As noted in section 3.1.1., the organisation as a system can act in various ways to perpetuate itself, or to promote change through negative and positive feedback loops. As an external input to this system, the GEPAM project influences not only the feedback processes within the organisation, but also the conceptualization of what the organisation's future goals are.

As explained in Section 3.1.2, processes both of learning, involving conscious reflection, and acquisition, involving practical assumption of new knowledge, occur within the PMSA as an organisation, with varying abilities to be institutionalized at different levels. Also noted, planners' perceptions are dependent on the processes of discourse across which learning and acquisition happen. After examining the models of theorists from the two major schools of thought in organisational learning, it becomes apparent that real world processes in public organisations are neither strictly technical, nor entirely social. Both the intent for rational action within the bureaucratic structure of the organisation, and the active use of personal understanding and judgement by individuals within the organisation mean that by necessity, organisational learning in the PMSA incorporates technical processes in a social and political context. In light of this, learning by definition, cannot be qualified as good or bad, beyond whether it agrees with, supports, or runs contrary to the goals of the organisation. Such goals must therefore be made explicit and periodic reflection and evaluation of the effectiveness of learning in meeting them is undertaken. In its attempts to use the GEPAM project as a tool towards meeting the organisation's goals of better government, the PMSA is engaging in social learning in a pragmatic sense, or “learning by doing.” In collaborating with community members and by promoting community participation, the PMSA as a public organisation must be careful and conscious of existing power imbalances and their effects on learning outcomes within the system. Meta-level reflection both among individuals and as a structured organisational process is key to understanding and accounting for these power imbalances. This can only be effective if the reflection is valued in the organisation. Furthermore, institutionalized reflection can promote

values transformations in all components of the organisation, which can reinforce organisational goals of self-reflection (positive feedback).

In section 3.1.5, I discuss planned change processes in organisations with the goals of change being the achievement of a particular state, or the engagement in the process of change itself. With relevance to the PMSA, both the achievement of a changed structure of local government, and the engagement of this organisation in processes of change guided by conscious reflection are goals of their engagement in the GEPAM project. The various models of organisational decision making structures presented in this thesis, from the hierarchical, authoritative structure, to the elites, bureaucratic, and resources models, demonstrate ways in which power can be understood to function in an organisational context. It is likely that within the PMSA, several of these structures may actively function with differing levels of agency in different aspects of organisational continuity or change at any one time. The relevance of these decision making models to the GEPAM project is that they point to areas of potential leverage within the organisation, and provide reasons why particular changes may be constrained, promoting reconsideration of learning and change strategies to be better structured and implemented for more effective acceptance within the organisational context. Also, the models highlight the fact that actors may not always be consistently pursuing what are explicitly stated as organisational goals. For example, the use of a "garbage can" decision-making model radically affects the value of presenting a change strategy or innovative technique of a particular project based on its scientific merit, and suggests that possibly more stress on the political value of a particular innovation might be useful. Overall, it simply reiterates the point that more explicit and deeper reflection both about changes proposed and the motivations underlying them, or relating to their goals are important to manageable and positive organisational learning outcomes.

The importance of visibility and measurability of benefits to motivation for change is also highlighted. This is notable here for the observation that when an organisation and its members perceive themselves to be in a situation of greater crisis (low management capacity), they are more motivated to actively pursue change, but as their capacity for effective management increases, their motivation to pursue change or learning decreases, to the point where they may lack the critical motivation to pursue organisational learning, before they have effectively recorded or institutionalized recent learnings that brought them out of crisis. Consequently, they may slip back into a situation of crisis before being again motivated to change and the cycle may repeat itself many times.

Concepts of planning as the transformation of action to knowledge from a North American perspective are explained, and a comparative Brazilian perspective highlighting the differences in theoretical considerations of the planner's and citizen's roles is presented. Also, it is noted that a belief in the ability to solve systemic social problems with technical innovation remains deeply ingrained in Brazilian planning culture. This value may seriously affect the ability of the PMSA as a learning system to place value on personal and group reflection about the effectiveness of processes, structures of administration, and other root causes of systemic problems. Whether a project such as GEPAM can change this is unlikely, though it can certainly promote new ways of thinking, or support movements towards more holistic social views.

A discussion of the role of planners as an ecology of agents in the project of liveability is presented. This has great conceptual significance in supporting and justifying the role of planners within the PMSA as a learning system. An example of a public organisation engaging in organisational learning is also presented, to highlight the important role of change within public sector organisations in the larger systemic changes necessary in society to move towards greater liveability. The particular political situation within and organisation of the PMSA is explained, as

it provides strengths and weaknesses and opportunities and constraints to the functioning of the organisation and its motivation and capacity to effectively engage in various aspects of learning and change processes.

In the analysis, I present individuals, structured relationships and organizational processes as components of the PMSA as a learning system. I examine these components at the levels of practical learning, values transformations and meta-level reflections about learning processes. Throughout, planners' perceptions are represented and analysed with consideration of the social political context from which they emerge, and which they themselves are actively engaged in shaping.

The analysis helps to uncover how learning processes and their outcomes leverage change in the organisation. The practical learning occurring for individuals, in structured relationships and through organisational processes, often through acquired knowledge and practices, have some ability to promote learning by values transformation, mostly at the individual level. Practical learning has a more limited ability to promote learning and change at a meta-level. Values transformation among individuals has a strong ability to promote changes in practice for all components of the organisation where the individual who experiences the value shift has significant agency and political decision-making power. They have a limited ability to promote learning and change at the meta-level. At the meta-level, learning occurring in individuals, structured relationships, and processes is relatively easily transmitted into structures for values transformations, where so desired by individual planners with high levels of agency and motivation. It is more difficult, however, for meta-level learning to be transmitted to daily practice of individuals, and more challenging for this meta-learning to counter what are often entrenched practices among individuals that may disagree with the organisation's mandate. From this, the interrelationships between types of learning and organisational components in which learning outcomes can leverage change become clearer.

Specifically, there was a significant difference in responses and reflections about the learning outcomes of the project between the technical staff (or civil servants) and the politically appointed staff. Generally, civil servants noted a greater degree of frustration with inability to implement change in the organization based on their learnings. (For example, they were unable to use a new GIS system they had been trained on because the city did not allocate funding sufficient to switch the organization to the new software.) Politically appointed staff were generally more likely to respond positively about the project. Notably, they were often in management positions with greater leverage to make change happen and more direct access to information about project activities. The following summarizes the key aspects of the analysis:

**Change in individual practice:** Planners in Santo Andre engaged in a whole range of activities that they had never done before, including developing a plan for watershed management, training for GIS and Environmentally Sensitive Areas classification. They did not however, record their observations about the effectiveness or difficulties encountered with the use of these new processes. Some become incorporated into the organization. Others did not.

**New or altered relationships in practice:** With the creation of a new management team in the watershed protection area, planners came into more direct daily contact with community members. They learned to ask community members for information about local area, residents, etc.

**Change in practical processes:** A new management body was created and put into place in the Watershed protection area, as a result of what planners learned about the needs of the area.

**Individual values transformation:** Some planners expressed feelings that their values had changed. For instance, one planner detailed how they had begun thinking about the project only in terms of environmental protection, and had wanted to remove all residents from informal settlements. Gradually, they came to see that this would not solve the larger systemic problem of poverty and unequal land tenure distribution, and to feel more for the welfare of the community members they came to know. They then came to value the area residents as potential stewards of the environment, and promoted search for livelihood generation activities for area residents.

**Values transformation through collective, interactive experience:** Participating in councils of representatives, planners learned that community members have more than just complaints, they also have suggestions for activities to improve their quality of life. Community members also noted that some of their ideas changed about how they valued the planners, from expecting planners to find solutions to problems, to valuing opportunities to engage with planners in more collaborative problem solving.

**Processes promoting values transformation:** The creation of community councils provided space for planners and community members to have dialogue. There WAS however, no explicit discussion between the two parties about what the values of good participation are, how it might be empowering in some situations and instrumentalizing in others – some planners and council members suggest its effectiveness is constrained because of this, and that processes are easily co-opted by powerful figures seeking to maintain clientelistic patterns of operation. Consequently, planners and community members created their own informal spaces to strategize about their participation in the formal space.

**Individual reflection:** Many planners noted that they actively engage in reflection about the project, most of these felt strongly that these reflections would not be valued by their superiors or by the organization.

**Collective reflection:** Collective reflection did not occur in the formal spaces of the organisation, though many planners noted its potential value.

**Institutionalized reflection processes:** Existing institutional reflection processes were limited to evaluations and monitoring reports for funders, which biased them significantly.

## 6.1 SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS WITH EXISTING THEORIES

From my research I found that planners engaged in GEPAM experienced learning at three different levels – in practice, in values and at a meta-level of understanding. Learning at these three levels was perceived to be occurring, or possible, not only among individual planners, but also in collective groups and in the structures of the organization itself. Recognizing the range of levels of learning and their interrelationships across the various components of the organization is useful and could strengthen the effectiveness of a particular capacity building project. To the best of my knowledge, there has been little, if any, documentation of international capacity building project as a vehicle for organizational learning. Neither has there been substantial writing about organizational learning that examines components of the organization and their relationship to different levels of learning in this way.

It became apparent, through the research, that although planners were experiencing a great deal of learning, they were not always able to incorporate the outcomes of these learnings into desired changes in the organization. Planners suggested this was often due to political

constraints or lack of leverage, lack of institutional memory or space for reflection, and failure to ensure those values inherent in and goals of organizational policy were supported, or even well understood by the organization's members. Though theory about social learning incorporates consideration of constraints imposed by political context, there has also been very little written about OL that connects theories of political functioning of organizations to learning and planned change processes. Future study in this area could be valuable to planning practitioners and researchers interested in organizational capacity building, especially in public organizations.

Although the project was able to promote a great deal of learning at many different levels and in different aspects of the organization, the possibilities for positive change to result from this depended heavily on the support of influential managers. Their values (including their political motivations and perceived professional responsibilities and understandings of organizational policy) largely determined what project activities would happen, what values would be promoted within them, and what learnings from the project became institutionalized. In some cases this was not consistent with the explicit goals of the organization, or of the project. There has been some writing about the value of experiential learning for policy makers. (also add built in recurring explicit values discussion among project participants and connect to project goals) This is extremely relevant to the GEPAM case, where a few managers and policy makers hold a great deal of leverage over the character and carrying out of various aspects of projects.

The project began as a collaborative endeavor with input and learning occurring between planners with different political leverage in the organization and position in the hierarchy, community representatives, and academics. After the initial project structure was determined, management reverted to a very hierarchical structure and the participation of and sense of ownership felt by participants with less political leverage (ie technical staff and community members) diminished significantly. This also relates to the necessity of deep trust and levelling the playing field, which are stressed in social learning, but missing from organizational learning theory. (Decentralized, democratic, participatory elements making up a board of directors and making decisions of the project democratically and binding organization to decision, should be built into project to promote sense of ownership at wider levels, encourage checks and balances on meeting explicit goals)

Because reflection about the project was not deep, or encouraged by all participants, not everyone necessarily bought into, or understood project goals. People were largely task-oriented, rather than thinking about the longer range goals of the project. Also, institutional structures for reflection that existed were largely limited to strategic planning sessions in which managers and department heads engaged in a checking-up process that was task-achievement focussed rather than project goal oriented. These sessions were directly tied to reports to the funder, which probably contributed to greater reluctance to discuss difficulties experienced.

Also, the organization did not receive funding for, or have specific separate time allocated for planners to engage in project activities. Heavily burdened by the range of responsibilities and constrained resources including time, money and personnel, managers decisions to engage staff in project activities were heavily based on their perception of the project's contribution to their professional goals and values.

## **7. IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION**

It is apparent in the analysis that individual learning outcomes, whether facilitated by processes of acquisition or conscious reflection, are closely related at the levels of practical skills and knowledge, values and reflective capacities and engagement. It is also noted that the learning

outcomes evident in the processes and structures making up the organisation have strong ties between the practical, the values based and the meta-level of learning. Relationship structures present a key connector between the components of individuals and organizational processes, as the practical learning and changes occurring in relationships are expressions of the values transformations of individuals while concurrently acting to shape and define the spaces in which these values are expressed. They are promoted or constrained by processes of the organisation as well as having an influence on the active shaping and use of these processes. Essentially, all processes of learning and change are linked within an organisation through practices and values, which have the potential to be reflected upon at the meta-level in order to determine their agreement with the goals of the organisation. The various dimensions of learning must be organised for conscious reflection about their technical and social aspects to facilitate institutionalization. It appears that learning is more easily implemented and reflected upon from a starting point of institutionalized structures promoting active reflection, while acquisition may be more effective in terms of planners adjusting their daily practices to meet their perceived needs. For this reason, the possibility of a disconnect between organisational goals, structure, individual values and actions exists. For an external input such as the GEPAM project to address this in an organisational context, it must promote equal participation among planners, clear recognition of differences in power, explicit goals of the organisation, and transparent structures and processes.

Experiential learning whereby transformations in values occur for individuals through relationships is perhaps the most difficult to transform to policymaking or institutional structure. While experiential learning and transformative value shifts are widely accepted as legitimate in the world of social sciences, they face problems in legitimization in institutional contexts where policy makers traditionally rely on quantifiable data and technocratic language.<sup>175</sup> Though tools and techniques promoting individual reflection and value shifts can be consciously promoted through development projects, the ability of individuals within organisations to carry their transformed views and values into institutional change is limited by their political agency within the organization, their political and personal motivations, and their evaluations of perceived risk. No less than a whole culture of institutionalizing transformative value shifts in all components of the organisation must be promoted and upheld by the beliefs of organisational members. For a project such as GEPAM to support this, it must consciously examine all levels at which learning might leverage change in support of this as individual actions, as well as attempt to draw all of these smaller actions together into a cohesive whole.

Discourse about development must normalize reflection and learning in all components of the organisation through decentralised processes, so as to avoid the possibilities of mainstreaming dissent, or tokenising, or instrumentalizing such important aspects as participation. Watching for, and providing space for reflection about unintended consequences must be present both in the structure of the project itself, as well as in the activities carried out within it. A project such as GEPAM, if properly and carefully organised, could be used as a 'neutral space' within the organisation, where issues of organisational structure and functioning, and relationships that are considered contentious within the organisation might be discussed.<sup>176</sup>

"The participatory tradition conceptualizes research as a process of reflection, learning and action, producing the development of a critical consciousness. Consciousness is seen as an important component in challenging existing power relations, and includes the social learning that can take place among those involved in a

<sup>175</sup> Brock, Karen and Rosemary McGee. Knowing Poverty. London: Earthscan Publications, 2002. 31.

<sup>176</sup> This concept of 'neutral' space presented by a development project is drawn from Brock, Karen and Rosemary McGee. Knowing Poverty. London: Earthscan Publications, 2002.

participatory research process. It is perhaps the most neglected element of participation as applied to poverty research...a little explored avenue for policy influence is the experiential learning of policy-makers...When such exposure is supported by an intentional and structured process of self-critical reflection.... it can provoke changes in vision and practice.”<sup>177</sup>

The case of the PMSA as an organisation learning and changing over time is very interesting. While very specific, important implications can be drawn from studying and generalizing about learning in various components across a range of levels within the organisation. The practical learning, values transformation, and meta-reflection provide a useful analytical framework for further examinations of organisational learning processes. The following implications for action are drawn from this analysis:

1. Those involved in the development of project structure and delivery should more carefully consider full range of learning levels and organizational components to better achieve true organizational capacity building. Project development and monitoring for capacity building in organizations should include consideration of the range of levels at which learning can occur, as well as the various components of organization in which it can occur. Understanding relationships between organizational components and levels of learning could promote more effective goal definition and attainment.
2. Greater separation between lessons learned and evaluative reports to funders for international development projects involving capacity building assistance, such as GEPAM, is necessary for effective outcomes.
3. Explicit space for reflection should be built in to project plans to foster learning loops that both help to define and to work towards organizational goals. Institutional space and time for reflection about practices, values, and reflection processes should be specifically incorporated into capacity building project plans. Promoting group reflection will enable an organization and its members opportunities to redefine project and organizational goals as the organization changes over time, as well as enable them to better adjust practices to achieve those goals. It may also create opportunities to examine the values inherent in an organization's policies, as well as the values held by its members.
4. The study of organizational functioning and learning processes could be valuable components of a planning education curriculum.

## 8. CONCLUSION

Through the representation of planners' perceptions in the analysis, this thesis has presented an in-depth exploration of an organisational learning process and provided evidence to support some existing theories about micro-processes of learning and change in organisations. In combination with the range of theories drawn upon and their relevance to the real-world context of the PMSA, the evidence presented in the analysis enriches existing theory of organisational learning and change by incorporating consideration of the effects of political context and other

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<sup>177</sup> Brock and McGee, 2002:10.

factors on the functioning of the learning planning system. The organisation is made up of various individuals who, according to and in their relationships with others, through various processes and structures, engage in discourses. Examining the planners' perceptions of the organisation as a system that learns and changes over time, partly through its relation with external inputs like GEPAM, brings forth insights about the strengths and weaknesses of the GEPAM project, as well as about the opportunities and constraints faced by planners when trying to move towards better regional governance. It is revealed that change and learning happen in multiple ways across different components of the organisation. Because of this they have different potentials for institutionalization and to leverage or inhibit further positive change and learning within the organisation. A table of the different kinds of learning encountered through the PMSA's experience with the GEPAM project and the organizational components in which they occurred is presented in the diagram below. None of the kinds of learning, as experienced by planners at the PMSA, can be institutionalized alone, or can ensure that learning contributes towards organizational goals, or that learning is consistent with organizational values. Instead, it is necessary to consider carefully how all aspects work together to leverage each other.



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