

Meaningful and Inclusive Engagement: Are We There Yet? A Case Study of Scarborough Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAS) Participatory Processes

Abstract

While Western planning shows an awareness about the importance of citizen participation, it is acknowledged that the conventional public meeting approach fails to truly engage with the public. Moreover, studies reveal this approach's limitations particularly impact ethnic communities. Research has been limited to investigate the inefficiency of the participatory framework from the experts' perspective. It has not addressed the issue of the lack of ethnic diversity in participatory processes nor have made concrete suggestions of changes for policymakers. This research investigates how ethnically diverse citizens participate and are engaged with the municipal participatory framework to uncover to what extent this approach meets their needs. This is done through a case study of the eight Scarborough Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs), which comprise an important share of diverse ethnic groups. This study reviews the NIAs participatory process and policies and uses interviews with representatives of the Scarborough communities, representatives of local neighbourhood agencies, and the City in order to examine participatory processes and uncover ethnic groups' perspectives concerning the municipal participatory approach.

Keywords: citizen participation, meaningful public engagement, citizen empowerment, ethnic communities, the City of Toronto participatory framework

Biography of Author

Kiana Cote's goal to deepen her knowledge in innovative and inclusive planning is the reason she decided to attend Ryerson University's Master of Planning in Urban Development. She also has a Bachelor's degree in Urban Planning from L'Université du Québec à Montréal. Kiana's academic background includes experiences in Detroit and New Orleans that led her to develop a strong interest in participatory planning that values local knowledge. Kiana currently works as a professional in urban planning for the Montreal-based firm BC2. As part of the Inter-Nation Collaboration Team, her work focuses on projects done with diverse communities of Quebec including First Nation communities.