



In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Matthew C. Cohen

Will defend his dissertation

Aligning Public Participation Processes in Urban Development Projects to Local Context

Abstract

Meaningful public participation is treated as an essential process for achieving sustainability in urban development. In many instances, however, public participation is inadequately defined and processes are formulaic. In such cases, participation may not match the local context of the communities within which a project is conducted. This dissertation treats urban public participation as a collaborative decision making process between residents, the business community, experts, public officials, and other key stakeholders. When these processes are not attuned with the local context (i.e. participant lifestyles, needs, interests, and capacities) key misalignments between process and context arise around living conditions and personal circumstances, stakeholder trust, civic engagement, collaborative capacity, and sustainability literacy, among others.

This dissertation is comprised of four studies. The first study reviews case studies of public participation processes and categorizes common misalignments between the public participation process and local context. Through expert interviews, the second study identifies strategies for overcoming these misalignments. The third study evaluates a participatory research project that attempted to align an urban development public participation process to the local context. Conversely, the fourth study is a participatory action research project to align the local context to the demands of public participation.

This body of research envisions public participation processes that are aligned with their local context, and it presents directives for designing meaningful, deliberative decision-making processes for sustainable urban development. The dissertation provides empirical support for theoretical debates on public participation while also creating actionable knowledge for planners and other urban development practitioners.

Friday, April 10, 2015
8:30am
Wrigley Hall, 481

Faculty, students, and the general public are invited.

Supervisory Committee:
Arnim Wiek, Co-chair
David Manuel-Navarrete, Co-chair
Daniel Schugurensky, Member