Vancouverites for Vancouver Rights:

The Role of Citizen Participation in Mitigating Green Gentrification

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Abstract

Across the globe, the majority of the world's population is living in cities, signifying a drastic shift from rural dwellings to living in urban spaces. This trend is predicted to continue, with 68% of the global population found in cities by 2050, according to the United Nations. In order to increase the quality of life in cities, several measures have been taken, including greening of cities. However, these measures disproportionately disadvantage lower socioeconomic groups, who have less access to green spaces, coining the concept of "green gentrification" or "eco-gentrification". Citizen participation emerges as a crucial tool in mitigating these effects. This study examines how citizen participation can mitigate the negative effects of green gentrification, focusing on the Vancouver Plan. Findings reveal progress towards inclusivity but limited citizen influence. Addressing green gentrification demands equitable urban planning and enhanced citizen involvement. Genuine collaboration between authorities and residents is vital for sustainable urban development.

Introduction

More and more of the world's population is found in cities, with more people living in urban areas as opposed to rural areas (Ritchie et al., 2024). This shift toward urbanization is expected to continue, with the percentage of the global population living in urban regions projected to increase from 55% to 68% by 2050, as reported by the United Nations in 2018. This trend reinforces the growing importance of recognizing the role of cities in addressing global challenges. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) acknowledge this importance through their incorporation of SDG 11 (United Nations, 2016), where the goal is to "make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable." In order to make active strides toward achieving this goal, it is crucial to understand not just the potential impact of population changes on cities but also the implications of shifts in urban demographics. A better grasp of such trends is imperative for developing and ensuring cities are sustainable, just, and liveable for all.

As a means to achieve this, cities have initiated efforts to transform urban areas through greening (Haase et al., 2017). However, in doing so, it has given rise to an environmental injustice regarding the accessibility of these spaces. More time spent in green spaces has been shown to directly impact one's health and well-being. The problem therein lies in the fact that higher-income households have more access to green spaces than people of color and low-income households (Wolch et al., 2014). As more greenery is added to a neighborhood, it increases its desirability. Housing prices rise, and the newly greened neighborhood becomes a haven accessible to the wealthy while simultaneously pushing low-income residents out of the area. This phenomenon in which the greening of city spaces manifests inequalities characteristic of gentrification has been coined *green gentrification* or *eco-gentrification* (Sax, Nesbitt, & Hagerman, 2022).

Citizen participation has gained traction in recent years as a tool to generate more engaged political decision-making. In principle, citizen participation involves a consultatory structure that enables the public to be an active agent in decision-making processes. This is proposed as a means to combat the consequences of political decisions made devoid of contextual consideration. Not only can citizen participation be a more inclusive approach to change, but it also heightens a sense of public responsibility (Michels & De Graaf, 2017).

In the case of urban planning, citizen participation is deemed an essential element in ensuring smoother implementation and more inclusive and equitable urban development processes (Amado et al., 2010). Recognizing the negative impacts of greening on less affluent residents and ensuring that communities have a voice in the development and maintenance of green spaces can promote equitable access and prevent displacement. Thus, fostering more inclusive and sustainable urban environments. Therefore, engaging low-income and marginalized communities in decision-making processes represents a promising strategy for mitigating the negative effects of green gentrification through inclusive urban planning efforts.

This research project aims to apply the concept of citizen participation to the phenomenon of green gentrification to explore how a more consultatory decision-making process could address its inherent inequalities, specifically using Vancouver, Canada, as a case study. The selection of Vancouver as the case study area is deliberate, given its status as a rapidly growing urban center grappling with issues of sustainability and social equity (Carpenter & Hutton, 2018). Within Vancouver, the focus is narrowed down to an examination of the Vancouver Plan, due to the scope of this paper and its comprehensive approach to urban development, emphasis on sustainability, and concerted efforts to address issues of equity and inclusion. By analyzing this plan, this study aims to shed light on the potential of citizen participation in mitigating the negative effects of green gentrification and fostering more equitable urban development practices. To guide the endeavor, this project poses the following research question: *To what extent can citizen participation limit the negative effects of green gentrification?*

Core Concepts

Urban Planning

Today, a greater proportion of the global population lives in cities. This number is only predicted to increase (United Nations, 2018) as people seek higher living standards and better incomes (Ritchie et al., 2024). Although urban growth leads to a great deal of opportunities, it also presents several challenges leading to inequalities and health issues (Montgomery et al., 2013). The quality of the city environment will directly impact the quality of life for urban residents (Elmqvist et al., 2013). Therefore, improving urban planning policies and processes is more crucial than ever to address these issues and ensure that cities remain livable for all their

inhabitants. The way cities approach urban planning is especially significant in the context of the climate crisis, as urban areas play a critical role in leading the sustainability agenda.

Urban Sustainability

Urban sustainability has emerged globally as a critical focus within development agendas, particularly through the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Goal 11 of the SDGs aims to "make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable" (United Nations, 2016). This goal underlines the importance of integrating environmental, social, and economic dimensions into urban planning and development.

Urban Greening

With many people residing in cities (World Bank, 2023), the livability of urban spaces has come increasingly into focus. Emerging research highlighting the social and physical health benefits of urban greening has sparked a movement to increase vegetation, public green spaces, and sustainable design in existing urban spaces (Herath & Bai, 2024). Urban greening takes many different forms. Examples of public green spaces include parks and reserves, streams and river banks, community gardens, green walls, corridors, and alleyways (Roy et al., 2012). Examples of private green spaces include shared grounds of apartment buildings and personal backyards. Urban green spaces vary greatly in size depending on purpose and context (Wolch et al., 2014). For instance, urban parks, waterways, or transportation corridors would be considered large green infrastructure projects (LGIPs), whereas smaller neighborhood green spaces entail community gardens or green walls (Rigolon & Németh, 2018).

Urban green spaces yield countless ecosystem services that critically contribute to public health. They can lead to cleaner air, reduced pollution, and cooler temperatures (Escobedo et al., 2011). This also leads to the urgency for cities to better adapt to and mitigate the perils of climate change (Gaffin et al., 2012). However, this movement of urban greening is not always equally beneficial to the diversity of urban populations, for implementing such greening initiatives can lead to challenges for local residents (Sax, Nesbitt, & Hagerman, 2022).

Literature Review

The following section aims to explore the existing literature on green gentrification and citizen participation and identify any gaps in it.

Green Gentrification

Green gentrification is the process by which urban greening initiatives, intended to increase livability and create more environmentally conscious city design, manifest and perpetuate inequalities. There is an important distinction to be made between equity and livability (Godschalk, 2004). The greening of the urban area increases the economic investment in that area. As a result, the sudden influx of affluence changes the monetary value of the space, posing challenges to existing residents and disproportionately impacting marginalized groups. These inequities can present as individuals experiencing social ostracisation, no longer being able to access the green spaces in their local area, or being forced entirely out of the area due to an inability to respond to rapid increases in property costs (Sax, Nesbitt, & Quinton, 2022). Green gentrification, therefore, is the troubling intersection of urban greening initiatives and socioeconomic disparity.

Negative Effects of Green Gentrification

Green gentrification illustrates how efforts to increase an area's environmental sustainability and livability can have unintended negative consequences, particularly for lower-income individuals (Sharifi et al., 2021). For example, efforts to create more greenery and collectivity in neighborhoods through the introduction of community gardens can adversely affect the area's affordability as that part of the city becomes more desirable. Similarly, the implementation of renewable energies and increases in city parks have a similar impact on the area's affordability (Hess & Winner, 2007).

Certain types of urban greening can lead to more green gentrification than others. For instance, LGIPs tend to have greater investments that aim to improve the environmental quality, thereby drawing in more wealthy households and leading to the gentrification of the low-income households that have been residing in these areas longer (Rigolon & Németh, 2018). This is due to the fact that LGIPs are brought to fruition on the basis of the stimulation of private development. Rigolon & Németh (2018) say, "They often link commerce, recreation, tourism, and real estate development, creating signature projects in urban areas"(p.71).

Meanwhile, Sax et al. (2022) discuss displacement further within the context of socio-spatial changes that may arise during and after urban greening projects, indicating that there is both a physical and psychological displacement. Physical displacement is marked by increased property values and new commercial interests, driving out long-term residents. This

influx of new residents and businesses changes the neighborhood's character, making it less familiar and comfortable for those who have lived there longer.

Psychological displacement, while less visible, is equally impactful. Long-term residents often feel that new green spaces and developments are not intended for them, leading to feelings of alienation and uncertainty. New residents redefine the space and enforce new behavioral norms, which can make traditional ways of interacting with the environment feel out of place. Familiar spaces are transformed to suit the preferences of newcomers, further eroding the sense of belonging for long-term residents.

Zheng et al. (2023) discuss how this domino effect of heightened inequality and class displacement can also be seen in the implementation of new sustainable technologies. For example, when a sustainable developer moves into an urban region and acquires property in order to implement new sustainable technologies, this results in the displacement of the current residents. However, this initial displacement is only the beginning of the gentrification process, as new sustainable technologies will attract more upper-class residents to the area. This, in turn, alters the spending patterns and property costs of the area, leading to further inflation of prices and inhibiting the livability of lower-income residents. This process demonstrates a secondary displacement. As cities are marketed as environmentally friendly, technologically advanced, and adaptable, their historical and ecological characteristics are diminished along with the attachment residents have to their neighborhoods and environment. Green gentrification not only results in physical displacement but also social, cultural, and psychological displacement and loss (Anguelovski, 2023).

Examples of Green Gentrification

Award-winning projects like New York's High Line, Atlanta's BeltLine, and Seoul's Gyeongui Line Forest Park stand as notable examples of repurposing disused infrastructure into vibrant green spaces aimed at enhancing the value of surrounding neighborhoods (Immergluck & Balan, 2017; Kwon, Joo, Han, & Park, 2017; Loughran, 2014; Smith, Duda, Lee, & Thompson, 2016). While these projects align with urban sustainability initiatives, seeking to create more livable, healthy, and resilient cities, they have also sparked significant gentrification along their corridors, eliciting regret from some of their initial advocates.

For instance, the High Line in New York City has garnered attention for its social and environmental benefits, yet its promotion primarily as a tool for economic growth and

competitiveness raises questions about its underlying motives (Lang & Rothenberg, 2017). Marketed as "inherently a green structure," the High Line represents a repurposed industrial relic transformed into a public green space. However, critics argue that such projects often rely on a form of "cultural bribery," catering to the desires of the affluent while legitimizing privatization schemes (Lang & Rothenberg, 2017). Despite claims of sustainability, the green design of projects like the High Line may prioritize profit over ecology, serving as a superficial veneer for processes of neoliberal urbanization and gentrification (Talen, 2013).

Moreover, the High Line exemplifies the broader trend of neoliberal redevelopment, where public spaces are commodified to generate economic returns amidst governmental cutbacks (Lang & Rothenberg, 2017). Economic analyses, such as the one conducted by the FHL, illustrate how repurposing projects like the High Line can yield substantial tax revenues, further fueling the cycle of urban redevelopment (David and Hammond, 2011).

Similarly, the Atlanta BeltLine serves as another example of collaborative planning within a neoliberal context. While collaborative planning paradigms aim to foster inclusive decision-making, they risk being co-opted by market-driven interests, perpetuating existing power relations and consolidating neoliberal governance (Dikeç, 2005). Such projects highlight the complexities of urban development, where well-intentioned initiatives may inadvertently reinforce inequitable systems and exacerbate socioeconomic disparities.

Citizen Participation

Based on initial research by Michels & De Graaf (2017), it was observed that citizen participation fosters heightened engagement and a sense of responsibility among the public. Despite this positive effect, citizens often find themselves sidelined from policy- and decision-making processes. Michels & De Graaf (2017) identified a particular demographic drawn to participatory initiatives. Their study revealed that participants in such activities typically possess higher levels of education and knowledge on the subjects at hand compared to non-participants. Moreover, these individuals often harbor pre-existing interests in the issues addressed by citizen initiatives.

When striving for citizen participation, it is imperative to consider systemic diversities. This responsibility should not solely rest on the public but must equally extend to existing systems and institutions, as they are responsible for recognizing the significance of diverse perspectives. These institutions must also acknowledge their role in involving citizens, ensuring

that citizen engagement is fostered through both bottom-up and top-down approaches (Chilvers et al., 2018).

Citizen participation in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is also vital. Cheshmehzangi & Dawodu (2018) assert that future action plans should be context-specific, implemented at the local level, and supported by national-level initiatives. Conversely, Kinzer (2018) challenges national-level plans, advocating instead for locally-driven initiatives critical to the sustainability agenda and inclusive of participatory processes.

Arnstein's Ladder of Participation

Sherry Arnstein's "A Ladder of Citizen Participation" (1969) serves as a foundational piece of literature on citizen participation. Arnstein highlights a discrepancy within the context of power dynamics, suggesting that those in positions of power may exploit or manipulate those deemed powerless. She contends that "citizen participation" encompasses citizen empowerment and serves as a means for "have-not citizens," excluded from political and economic processes, to reclaim power and influence future plans. Consequently, Arnstein (1969) emphasizes the importance of discerning between various forms of citizen participation—distinguishing between transformative participation capable of effecting change and more superficial forms. To illustrate these distinct levels of participation, Arnstein devised a conceptual ladder (see **Figure 1.**), with each rung denoting the extent of citizen empowerment. The higher the rung, the greater the citizen's capacity to enact meaningful change.
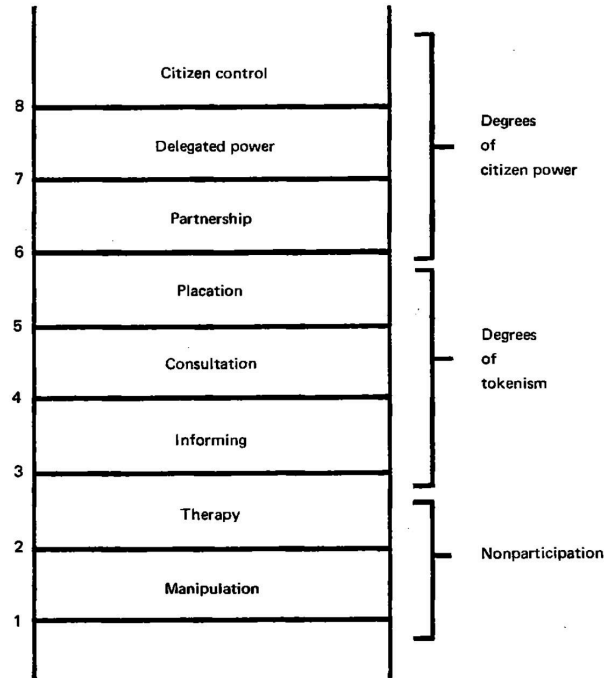
Figure 1. Ladder of citizen participation (Arnstein, 1969)

The initial two stages (i.e., 1 and 2) reside within nonparticipation. Within these stages, the objective of those wielding power is not to incorporate citizens into participatory processes but rather to "educate or cure" them. The subsequent three stages (i.e., 3, 4, and 5) are depicted as varying degrees of tokenism. While these stages afford citizens the opportunity to voice their opinions, they lack the authority to translate those voices into actionable change. The uppermost three stages (i.e., 6, 7, and 8) represent degrees of citizen empowerment. It is solely within these stages that citizens possess bargaining power and legislative authority to influence outcomes in their favor (Arnstein, 1969).

However, considerable criticism surrounds Arnstein's ladder, both from Arnstein herself and from others. Arnstein concedes that framing the dichotomy between those with power and those without power in such stark terms is an oversimplification. Nonetheless, she contends that individuals on one end of the spectrum often lump together those on the opposing end rather than recognizing their diversity. Moreover, Arnstein's ladder presumes that citizen empowerment is the ultimate goal, though this may not always be the case (Tritter & McCallum, 2006). Michels & De Graaf (2017) argue that citizen participation is not about attaining power but rather about fulfilling citizenship. Another critique of the ladder is its apparent emphasis on citizen

participation during the stages of solution development rather than in the stages of problem framing (Tritter & McCallum, 2006).

Citizen Participation in Urban Development

In recent years, cities in the Western world have increasingly embraced citizen participation as a strategy to address urban issues. This shift is often characterized as a way to transfer responsibilities to local individuals and groups rather than solely relying on governmental institutions (Stapper & Duyvendak, 2020). Regardless, the inclusion of citizen participation in urban planning is said to foster more acceptance and lead to easier implementation of urban planning processes. Therefore, the incorporation of participatory planning processes is crucial (Amado et al., 2010).

Citizen participation in urban development also leads to feelings of empowerment. However, Stapper & Duyvendak (2020) argue that this sense of empowerment is merely surface-level. They also highlight the "entrepreneurial qualities" that are needed in citizens (i.e., active, communicative, enthusiastic, flexible, etc.). Those who possess these characteristics are often deemed "good residents" or "entrepreneurial citizens." This leads to disparities in urban policy as they are based more on the so-called entrepreneurial citizen as opposed to the non-entrepreneurial citizen. Consequently, prioritizing some residents over others and leading to a less equitable outcome that is not representative of most citizens. Although it may still be perceived as such. Therefore, it is essential to recognize when and where there might be a lack of access to participation and ensure measures are in place to oversee and assess participation. Particularly with regard to citizen exclusion (Stapper & Duyvendak, 2020). To achieve sustainable urban development successfully, it is essential to establish tangible processes that enable people to be active contributors to change (Cheshmehzangi & Dawodu, 2018).

Citizen Participation and Green Gentrification

The existing literature lacks clarity regarding the direct link between citizen participation and green gentrification. While limited research exists specifically on how citizen participation can mitigate green gentrification, the existing literature provides sufficient evidence to support this conclusion.

Firstly, green gentrification is described as a social and environmental justice issue. In a handful of literature, the definition of environmental justice is evolving and often heavily debated upon (Matsuoka & Raphael, 2024). Environmental justice refers to the rights of people

and communities, regardless of their ethnicity, gender, race, socioeconomic background, etc., in equally benefitting from a safe, healthy and protected environment. Within the concept of environmental justice, participation is a pivotal aspect of addressing inequalities. Research shows that inclusive decision-making processes, where community members are actively involved, lead to more just and effective policies (Schlosberg, 2013). By engaging residents in the planning and implementation of green projects, cities can better address the needs and concerns of marginalized communities who are most vulnerable to displacement and other negative effects of gentrification (Wolch et al., 2014).

Furthermore, participatory approaches help to build trust and accountability between the community and policymakers, fostering a sense of ownership and stewardship over local spaces (Michels & De Graaf, 2017). Thus, citizen participation emerges as a promising tool to limit the negative impacts of green gentrification by ensuring that urban greening initiatives are designed and implemented in a manner that benefits all residents equitably.

Methodology

This study uses qualitative research methods to explore the impact citizen participation has on limiting the negative effects of green gentrification. The research focuses on Vancouver as a case study and conducts a document analysis as a data collection method. A base of knowledge was built through a literature review, as introduced prior, gaining more insights through a case study.

The literature review combined scientific papers with governmental reports, resulting in a total of 26 revised documents. This allows for the identification of key trends, gaps, and patterns in the existing body of knowledge. The literature review was started broadly, focusing on literature regarding urban planning, green gentrification, and citizen participation. The search engine Smartcat, the academic online library of the University of Groningen, was primarily utilized. The study uses peer-reviewed papers, using keywords such as "green gentrification," "urban greening," "citizen participation," "equity in urban planning," "just cities," and "sustainable urban development." In order to gain a deeper understanding and insight into the impacts of citizen participation on mitigating green gentrification, a case study of the Vancouver Plan was analyzed.

The documents analyzed were selected depending on the relevance to the research question and entailed a systematic review of the following literature:

- The Vancouver Plan
- Vancouver Plan updates
- City reports
- Engagement summaries
- Urban planning and policy documents

Document analysis as a method is also inherently prone to a number of limiting factors. Sometimes, the retrievability of documents used in analysis might be low, as access can be deliberately blocked or simply lost when digital infrastructures get restructured. Similarly, there can be *biased selectivity* as those documents that are publicly accessible are usually aligned with an underlying corporate or governmental agenda. Thus, as documents are not produced for the same purposes as research, singular documents and their contents rarely suffice to answer academic research questions (Bowen, 2009) properly. None of these limitations diminish the usefulness of document analysis as a research tool. However, they need to be considered when discussing the presented findings.

Case Study Analysis: The Vancouver Plan

Vancouver is a city that is actively striving to become one of the greenest cities in the world (City of Vancouver, 2021). With many current plans for sustainable urban development and numerous green initiatives, Vancouver provides a valuable context for exploring the dynamics of green gentrification and the role of citizen participation in mitigating its negative effects. Vancouver's diverse demographic and its participatory approach to urban planning make it an interesting case study to examine how citizen participation can contribute to reducing the negative impacts of green gentrification.

Background

Located on the coast of western Canada's southernmost tip, on the unceded territory of the Musqeam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations (City of Vancouver, 2024), the city of Vancouver is an intersection of landscapes and cultures. Vancouver is the third largest metropolitan area after Toronto and Montreal, with a population of 660,000 people (Statistics Canada, 2023) and 2.46 million in the broader Metro Vancouver area of 21 municipalities (Carpenter & Hutton, 2018). The population is expected to increase by about a million more people and half a million more jobs and homes by 2050 (City of Vancouver, 2020a).

Vancouver's urban development is limited due to various natural barriers. The Coast Mountain range lies to the north and east, the US border is approximately 40km to the south of central Vancouver, and the Salish Sea lies to the west. Additionally, significant allocations of land for wilderness and parks, combined with 22% of Metro Vancouver's protected agricultural land, restrict urban growth (Carpenter & Hutton, 2018). Consequently, these factors have led to a trend where Vancouver is expanding vertically rather than horizontally, focusing on high-density development and maximizing the use of limited available land.

Along with population growth and densification, Vancouver has also experienced population diversification. Between 1971 and 2016, the City of Vancouver experienced a population increase of 48%, with internal and international migration as the primary driver (Carpenter & Hutton, 2018). Due to strong economically incentivized connections with countries in the Asia-Pacific region, there has been an influx of migrants from China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, India, the Philippines, and South Korea. Many of these migrants bring established wealth and income from outside the country into Canada and can be considered 'millionaire migrants' (Ley, 2010). As a consequence, Vancouver's housing market has seen substantial investments from these millionaire migrants (Carpenter & Hutton, 2018). Such a rapid increase in external wealth has further contributed to greater housing demand and increased housing prices within Vancouver (Moos & Skaburskis, 2010). This phenomenon is discussed in depth by Ley (2010), which connects the pattern of 'millionaire migration' to neo-liberal policy regimes that dissolve borders in order to encourage a free flow of financial capital.

This influx of wealthy migrants into the city of Vancouver has challenged the city's 'livability' goals (Tolfo & Doucet, 2022). Vancouver has a reputation as a highly regarded and desirable city, consistently ranking among the top in global livability indices (EIU, 2023). This is due to high scores in accessibility of green spaces, infrastructure, education, and culture (Carpenter & Hutton, 2018). However, Vancouver is also ranked highly on the list of most unaffordable cities worldwide, ranking third globally using a measurement of 'house price-to-income' ratio (Urban Reform Institute & Frontier Centre for Public Policy, 2023). Demographia International Housing Affordability. In Demographia. Retrieved June 6, 2024, from http://www.demographia.com/dhi.pdf. Such contrasts are present in the city, with high-rise condominium apartments in one district and poverty and marginalization in neighboring communities (Carpenter & Hutton, 2018).

As mentioned above, gentrification is already a pressing concern in Vancouver. With the rise of sustainability agendas and urban greening, Vancouver is also experiencing green gentrification. According to Anguelovski et al. (2022), urban greening is a significant driver of gentrification in Vancouver. The city has undertaken extensive greening projects across many areas, with developers and city officials actively using green branding and rhetoric to attract large-scale market-price housing and higher-income residents (Anguelovski et al., 2022). According to Brand Finance (Baum, n.d.).Vancouver has one of the strongest brands that is particularly recognized for being a clean, green, and environmentally sustainable city (City of Vancouver, n.d.). This green image, while beneficial for attracting investment and promoting a healthy environment, contributes to rising property values and living costs. A key challenge for Vancouver is balancing its green initiatives with the need for affordable and inclusive housing so that sustainability benefits all residents without causing displacement.

Overview of Plan

One of the primary frameworks guiding Vancouver's urban development is the Vancouver City Plan. This plan took shape between fall 2019 and spring 2022 and incorporated other existing strategies and frameworks developed by the City of Vancouver, such as the Reconciliation Framework or the Equity Framework. The Vancouver Plan does not aim to undermine pre-existing strategies or frameworks but rather wishes to build upon them. The Plan includes policies that support the vision of Vancouver as a sustainable, inclusive, and livable city over the next three decades (City of Vancouver, 2020a, p. 7; p. 147).

The Vancouver Plan has three foundational principles and three big ideas. The foundational principles include reconciliation, equity, and resilience. Reconciliation refers to respecting and understanding the Musqeam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations and ensuring they are a critical part of the planning process. Equity is the principle that growth and change are distributed equitably amongst neighborhoods, where equity-denied groups need to be particularly considered. Resilience is about ensuring the city incorporates plans to "withstand, adapt, recover, and thrive in the face of shocks like earthquakes and climate change impacts." These principles not only guide and inform the policies within The Plan but are also well integrated throughout its framework. The Vancouver Plan also highlights the importance of the interconnectedness of these principles (City of Vancouver, 2020a, p. 24; p. 29-37).

The Plan is guided by three "Big Ideas". These ideas help provide direction for the city's future growth and change and shape the land use strategy and policy development. The three big ideas are equitable housing and complete neighborhoods, climate protection and restored ecosystems, and an economy that works for all (City of Vancouver, 2020a, p. 25; pp. 39-45).
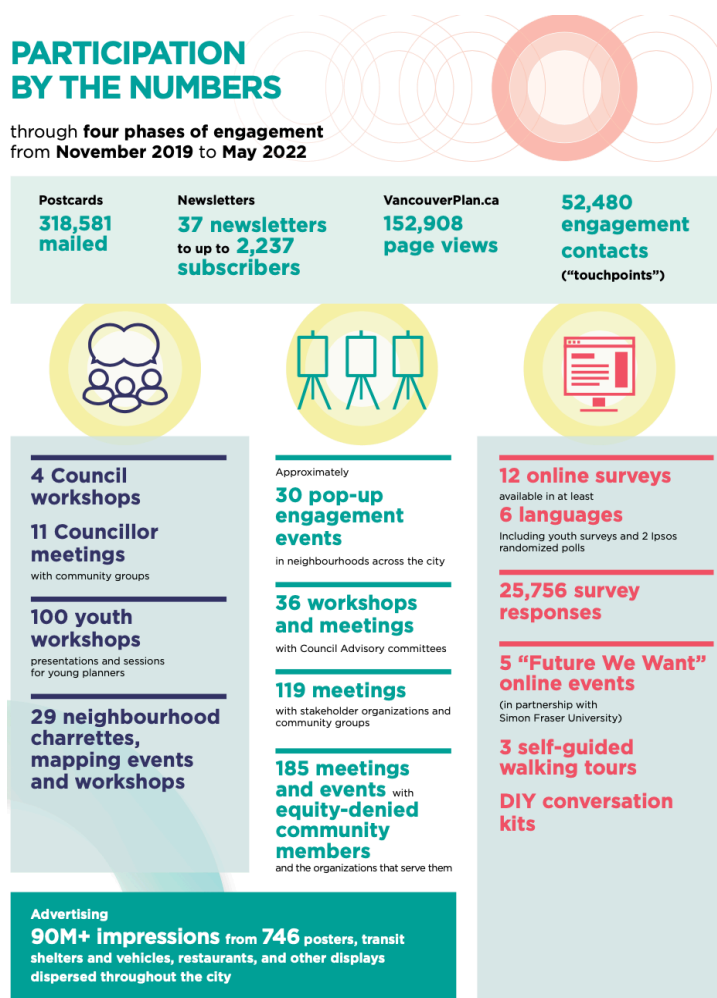
Citizen Participation

The Vancouver Plan boasts a shared vision that is rooted in the recognition of citizen participation as an integral part of designing a city-wide plan. Therefore, it was important for those developing the plan to reach as broad an audience as possible. For the Vancouver Plan, it was of particular importance to include the voices of those most often left out of planning processes. This includes but is not limited to, equity-denied groups, Indigenous communities, and under-represented populations. Equity-denied groups are described in the plan as "those who have been excluded from the design of current societal, governmental, and legal systems and who face marginalization and discrimination as a result of that exclusion" (City of Vancouver, 2020a, p. 19).

To ensure this, three main types of engagements took place: Indigenous engagement, equity engagement, and youth engagement. Indigenous engagement involved establishing partnerships with the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, and the Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council (MVAEC), aiming to integrate Indigenous perspectives and foster mutual respect. Equity engagement focused on involving equity-denied groups through partnerships with Neighbourhood Houses, community centers, and non-profits, using methods like focus groups, workshops, and surveys across various neighborhoods. Youth engagement, through the Young Planners Program, connected with over 3,000 children and youth via digital studio sessions, surveys, workshops, and educational programs, supported by community centers, the Vancouver School Board, and youth organizations (City of Vancouver, 2020a, p. 20).

The Engagement Process

The development of the Vancouver Plan involved four key phases of engagement and included various outreach strategies (see **Figure 2.**).

PARTICIPATION BY THE NUMBERS
through **four phases of engagement** from **November 2019** to **May 2022**

Postcards
318,581 mailed

Newsletters
37 newsletters to up to **2,237 subscribers**

VancouverPlan.ca
152,908 page views

52,480 engagement contacts ("touchpoints")

4 Council workshops

11 Councillor meetings with community groups

100 youth workshops presentations and sessions for young planners

29 neighbourhood charrettes, mapping events and workshops

Approximately
30 pop-up engagement events in neighbourhoods across the city

36 workshops and meetings with Council Advisory committees

119 meetings with stakeholder organizations and community groups

185 meetings and events with **equity-denied community members** and the organizations that serve them

12 online surveys available in at least **6 languages** Including youth surveys and 2 Ipsos randomized polls

25,756 survey responses

5 "Future We Want" online events (in partnership with Simon Fraser University)

3 self-guided walking tours

DIY conversation kits

Advertising
90M+ impressions from **746** posters, transit shelters and vehicles, restaurants, and other displays dispersed throughout the city

Figure 2. Summary of engagement participation in the Vancouver Plan
(City of Vancouver, 2020a, p. 21)

Phase 1: Listen and Learn (November 2019 - September 2020)

This initial phase focused on understanding the needs and aspirations of Vancouver's citizens. The goal was to gather a broad range of perspectives to inform the planning process. The aim was to ensure that traditionally underrepresented voices were heard and included in the planning discussions. The city launched extensive outreach efforts to connect with various communities, including Indigenous Peoples, equity-denied groups, youth, and other stakeholders. Methods included public meetings, digital surveys (offered in multiple languages), workshops, and pop-up events. This approach aimed to make future engagement efforts more responsive, inclusive, and welcoming. By the end of this phase, ten provisional goals were identified (City of Vancouver, 2022c).

Phase 2: Identifying Key Directions (October 2020 - July 2021)

The second phase built on the insights from Phase 1. This phase engaged over 10,000 community members and involved more than 90 community organizations to gather ideas on achieving these goals and shaping the "Future We Want." It explored different scenarios and options for Vancouver's future development. The focus was on identifying potential land use and policy directions to achieve the city's goals. The city facilitated discussions and consultations to delve deeper into specific ideas and scenarios. Engagement focused on several key policy areas: creating complete and connected neighborhoods that offer easy access to essential services and amenities, streamlining rental housing development to simplify and accelerate the construction of rental housing in commercial zones and areas close to local shopping and daily needs, and addressing the impacts of displacement and exclusion to ensure housing solutions are inclusive and equitable for all citizens. Stakeholder groups, community organizations, and the general public were invited to provide feedback on the proposed options. This phase involved interactive workshops and online platforms to allow for broader participation. By the end of this phase, there was a realization that in order to achieve the desired future, there needs to be a change in the current approach to city policy. This aided in the establishment of the three 'Big Ideas' mentioned above (City of Vancouver, 2021b; City of Vancouver, 2020b).

Phase 3: Policy and Land Use Ideas (August 2021 - November 2021)

In this third phase, citizens were asked to reflect on questions regarding the three Big Ideas or the three Core Values that came out of the previous phases. The City of Vancouver connected with over 6,500 community members, local groups and organizations, and other stakeholders. A variety of engagement activities, including surveys, workshops, open houses, and events, helped discover the choices and priorities regarding how Vancouver's neighborhoods could develop and grow by 2050 and beyond (City of Vancouver, 2022b). To ensure the Vancouver Plan reflects the voices and diversity of the population, input was gathered from everyone who lives, works, or plays in Vancouver, with special attention to historically underrepresented groups. In addition to community-wide engagement, a core focus of Phase 3 included working with equity-denied communities and the organizations serving them. This involved designing and delivering customized activities and providing additional support to lower barriers to participation at all events (City of Vancouver, 2021a).

Phase 4: Draft and Final Plan (December 2021 - July 2022)

Phase 4 of the Vancouver Plan engagement process focused on refining and finalizing the draft Vancouver Plan. With a clearer vision of the desired future and the choices necessary to achieve it, this phase emphasized sharing the draft plan with the public and ensuring the proper tools and partnerships were in place for successful implementation. From April 5 to April 27, 2022, the draft Vancouver Plan was presented for public feedback through two separate surveys, information sessions in different parts of the city, and a special youth questionnaire. Stakeholder meetings and targeted activities to engage youth and equity-denied groups also took place. The feedback received from this phase indicated an inclusive action plan emphasizing the creation of more housing, support for the local economy, and addressing the climate crisis was very much needed in Vancouver (City of Vancouver, 2022a).

Plan implementation (July 2022 - Ongoing)

The plan is currently in its fifth phase, the implementation phase. Implementing the Vancouver Plan involves two main steps. Firstly, there will be a thorough review and consolidation of existing urban development guidelines and regulations. This process aims to ensure that these frameworks remain relevant to the evolving urban landscape and effectively address the city's challenges. The Vancouver Plan will guide this endeavor. Secondly, there will be a focus on developing future area plans that align with the overarching vision outlined in the Vancouver Plan.

Discussion

It is important to investigate the different forms of citizen participation and their potential impact on mitigating the negative effects of green gentrification in order to answer the research question, "To what extent can citizen participation limit the negative effects of green gentrification?" This section aims to explore the various engagement methods used and their impact on the development process of the Vancouver Plan. Specifically, their impact on the outcome of a more equitable, inclusive, and just plan that limits displacement. Thereby limiting the negative effects of green gentrification. This will be done through the lens of the theories and literature discussed in the literature review.

Effectiveness of Citizen Participation in the Vancouver Plan

Before exploring the research question directly, it is important to establish the kind of citizen participation that took place and how well it was executed.

Overall, the engagement process was designed to be inclusive, reaching over 52,480 engagement touchpoints. Emphasis was placed on involving underrepresented, Indigenous, and equity-denied groups to ensure a diverse range of perspectives. The city employed a variety of engagement methods, including traditional in-person meetings and innovative digital platforms, to maximize participation and gather comprehensive input for the Vancouver Plan.

The Vancouver Plan emphasized its desire to incorporate a broad range of voices, especially those from marginalized and Indigenous communities. This is something that the Vancouver Plan did relatively well. The demographic profile of respondents was well kept, although there are limitations as not all respondents decided to provide their personal information (City of Vancouver, 2022c). After the second phase in the engagement process, the demographic profile collected based on partaking in public engagement indicated an overrepresentation of white, English-speaking participants. After realizing this, the City of Vancouver reflected on their methods of seeking engagement, and in the following phase, they tried to address this disparity through more targeted approaches (City of Vancouver, 2021b). In Phase 3, these voices were prioritized and sought out the most.

During the development of the Vancouver Plan, the City of Vancouver also conversed with Council Advisory Committees, which included members of varying backgrounds. For example, the Children and Youth Committee, the Women's Advisory Committee, and the People with Disabilities Committee (City of Vancouver, 2020b).

Additionally, the digital surveys sent out were available in multiple languages since a large number of Vancouver citizens speak languages other than English as their first language. Workshops conducted also often had translators or employees who spoke multiple languages to ensure there was a low entry barrier when participating.

One of the many challenges of citizen participation is that those engaging in citizen participation initiatives often have more knowledge or time to participate (Michels & De Graaf, 2017). Stapper & Duyvendak (2020) point out the importance of knowing exactly how a lack of participation manifests in order to ensure equitable outcomes, and Cheshmehzangi & Dawodu (2018) highlight the importance of actively setting up tangible processes that tackle this and

allow more people to engage. This is in line with how the City of Vancouver approached citizen participation in the development of this urban planning initiative.

Mitigating the Negative Effects of Green Gentrification

The Vancouver Plan outlines ambitious planning policies that indicate the city's desire for a sustainable, equitable, and resilient city. Given the city's existing challenges with significant gentrification, coupled with its renowned emphasis on its sustainable, green city brand, the ongoing gentrification in Vancouver should be recognized as an instance of green gentrification.

Although not directly tackled or mentioned, the Vancouver Plan incorporates mitigation strategies for the negative effects of green gentrification. This can be seen in their methods of facilitating citizen participation within the Vancouver Plan as a means to tackle displacement and inequities and, instead, strive for inclusivity.

The Vancouver Plan adopts a multifaceted approach to citizen engagement, employing various outreach strategies like public meetings, surveys, workshops, and online platforms. These efforts align with the Informing and Consultation rungs of Arnstein's ladder, aiming to foster transparency and gather public opinion. However, while these methods are crucial for providing input, they may not always translate into significant influence over final decisions (Arnstein, 1969). By involving residents in the planning process, particularly those from marginalized and equity-denied groups, the plan addresses issues of housing affordability and aims to minimize physical, psychological, and cultural displacement by ensuring diverse perspectives are considered. Both of which are thereby also tackling the negative impacts of green gentrification.

The incorporation of advisory committees and focus groups representing diverse community segments, including Indigenous communities and equity-denied groups, indicates a move towards Placation on Arnstein's ladder. While citizens are granted some advisory roles, their power to enact change remains limited. Despite this limitation, these efforts have the potential to mitigate the negative effects of green gentrification by providing a platform for marginalized voices and addressing issues of inequality within urban development initiatives.

The emphasis on equity and reconciliation within the Vancouver Plan suggests a shift towards Partnership. By integrating these communities into the planning process, the city shares decision-making responsibilities with its citizens, albeit to varying degrees. This collaborative approach has the potential to mitigate the negative effects of green gentrification by instilling

greater feelings of trust and accountability. Such collaboration also allows for an exchange of values. Michel & De Graaf (2017) elaborate on a sense of stewardship and ownership of spaces that derive from citizen participation. However, it should be recognized that this is a sense that the Indigenous Peoples have been fostering for years as they are guided by their ancestral stewardship laws (City of Vancouver, 2020a).

Despite these strides, the plan has yet to fully realize the Delegated Power and Citizen Control stages of Arnstein's ladder. While certain initiatives may offer opportunities for delegated power, such as community-led projects and neighborhood-specific planning efforts, full citizen control over the decision-making process remains difficult within Vancouver's current urban planning framework. Even on a Partnership level, although equity-denied groups and Indigenous communities are part of the planning and implementing process, they are still not the ones who have the power to set the agenda.

In general, the Vancouver Plan demonstrates elements of informing, consultation, and placation, with a notable movement towards partnership in its citizen engagement strategies. While it falls short of achieving delegated power and citizen control, its inclusive approach and emphasis on equity and reconciliation represent steps toward deeper citizen participation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while the Vancouver Plan demonstrates progress towards inclusive and participatory urban planning, there is room for improvement in achieving deeper citizen participation and addressing the structural inequalities inherent in green gentrification. Moving forward, future research should focus on refining citizen participation approaches, assessing their effectiveness at different stages of the planning process, and examining their impact on marginalized communities. By advancing our understanding of citizen participation in urban planning, we can strive towards more equitable, resilient, and sustainable cities.

Limitations

In regard to the scope of this dissertation, there are a couple of noteworthy limitations. As this paper relies on document and content analysis to evaluate the impact of citizen participation on green gentrification, no interviews were conducted. Nonetheless, the inclusion of interviews, focus groups, or other qualitative and quantitative methods could have added more depth to the study. As is, this study focuses on the normative framework set in the Vancouver Plan and its

possible implications. Other research methods could better assess possible differences between this normative frame and empirical reality, thus helping to locate possible implementation issues further. Similarly, a social media analysis had to be excluded from the scope of this paper, yet could still provide valuable insights considering the Vancouver Plan's reliance on social media for outreach purposes.

Furthermore, as the engagement process that helped shape the Vancouver plan took place during COVID-19, the results presented here may have been impacted. Citizen engagement during this time of quarantine and social isolation might not be representative of non-pandemic times. As such, this limitation is crucial to consider when discussing the generalizability of the findings presented here.

Future Research

Further, this paper's findings suggest a number of future research avenues that might prove useful when looking to design citizen participation projects that can effectively combat green gentrification. Firstly, further exploration of the differences between bottom-up and top-down citizen participation approaches is necessary. While the term citizen participation might already suggest a bottom-up approach to a certain extent, the implementation of such participation measures can still be decidedly top-down. A better understanding of what implementation designs yield the best results and a greater number of citizens participating is crucial when looking to improve upon the work of projects such as the Vancouver Plan.

Secondly, further research should focus on better evaluating at what stage of the process citizen participation proves most effective. Outcomes might differ depending on whether citizens are consulted and given a voice already in the planning stages or only the implementation stage. By determining the best juncture for citizen participation, future projects looking to combat green gentrification can only be improved.

Thirdly, and more generally, future research can benefit from focussing on qualitative research methods to complement the content analysis performed here. Interviews on the effects of the Vancouver Plan on marginalized groups such as Indigenous people and equity-denied groups can help illuminate possible structural issues of citizen participation design and implementation.

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