Youth Participation in Transportation Planning: The City of Toronto's Youth Engagement Strategy

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A Major Paper submitted to the Faculty of Environmental Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Environmental Studies, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

August 08, 2020

ABSTRACT

Utilizing the principles of critical discourse analysis (CDA), I decode the power relations embedded in the 2015 City of Toronto's *Youth Engagement Strategy* report to allow for a solid understanding of the framework used by planners in their proposed "engagement" with youth and in (dis)locating "transportation" in their planning (or non-planning) for youth. With the report stating transit and transportation as the leading issue the youth care about, I argue the misconception that the youth of today are not concerned with transportation planning. The traditional adult-oriented approach to transportation planning has served the youth by default, and this is very concerning. The youth deserve to be invited into the decision-making process as well as informed as to the impact of their participation. We cannot call for youth participation if that participation does not have meaning. The City of Toronto's Planning Division needs to invite youth voices if they are prepared to listen to them. Youth participation is a promise we make to young people. Their idealism, strength, and creativity are a gift to us, and we need to treat it as such.

FOREWORD

This Major Paper represents the culmination of my graduate studies towards the degree of Master in Environmental Studies, with a specialization in the Planning Stream. The objectives of my planning studies are fulfilled through three major components of this research paper: (1) youth participation (2) transportation planning and (3) planning theory. In researching and writing this paper, I have gained substantial knowledge of the community planning process, engagement strategies, the participatory as well as the political process, with a focus on youth advocacy. Moreover, I have developed a solid understanding of transportation planning and the complex challenges of politics, power, participation, and investment that influence planning in the City of Toronto. The need for an 'equity' perspective in planning and consideration of its social and spatial implications in the distribution of transportation services and its benefits is imperative. This research embodies the knowledge and skills accumulated from the various courses of the Faculty of Environmental Studies. Through this experience, I have obtained the knowledge and skills necessary to satisfy the entry requirements of the Ontario Professional Planners Institute for candidate membership. This Major Paper has contributed to my knowledge and in return I hope to contribute to the study of transportation planning and youth participation.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this paper to my family and above all Allah (God). My *hooyo* (mother), Dubo Abdulkadir Mohamed, a woman who is as comforting as she is strong. My *abo* (father), Mohamed Abdulkadir Ahmed, a man who sacrificed everything to give his family a better life. *Hooyo* and *Abo* there are not enough words to describe how grateful I am to both of you. Thank you for giving me the life that every child deserves and being such wonderful parents. To my brothers, sister and sister-in-law, Mahad Abdulkadir Mohamed, Jabir Abdulkadir Mohamed, Adde Abdulkadir Mohamed, Rukiya Abdulkadir Mohamed, and Sadiya Mohamed, thank you for putting up with me. Love you all. To my beautiful nephew and nieces Bashir Mohamed, Hanan Mohamed, Ruwaydah Mohamed, and Amina Mohamed, you have been the source of my liveliness as well inspiration in this research paper. Your love, high-spirits and laughter gave me the strength to complete this paper. To my late brother, Osman Abdulkadir Mohamed, whose memories continue to regulate my life – I love and miss you. May Allah (SWT) grant you *Jannatul Firdaws* (heaven). Amen.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to pay special regards to my father Mohamed Abdulkadir Ahmed, a co-founder and lecturer of Architecture and Town Planning at Jamhuriya University of Science and Technology in Mogadishu, Somalia and a lecturer at Banadir and SIMAD Universities. Your encouragement, unconditional love, and support in writing this paper while here in Mogadishu meant the world to me. My mother, Dubo Abdulkadir Mohamed, I am forever indebted to you. You have been a constant source of inspiration and a great model of resilience. I hope that I have made both of you proud.

A monumental thank you to my supervisor, Dr. Nombuso Dlamini from the Faculty of Education for taking me under her wing. Thank you for your patience, friendship and guidance in completing this paper. I would also like to thank my advisors Dr. Abidin Kusno and Dr. Roger Keil from the Environmental Studies Faculty who inspired me to think outside the box as well as guided me in taming the scope of this paper. All of you have challenged me immensely which has contributed to my growth in this program.

Finally, I cannot begin to express my appreciation to the Faculty of Environmental Studies, colleagues, and my friends who have been part of this journey. Your contributions to my learning experience are invaluable.

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PREFACE

I remember writing my statement of interest in 2018 to the Faculty of Graduate Studies at York University, I was hoping to write on the importance of a more inclusive urban future using Mogadishu, the capital city of Somalia as a case study – one of the most highly contested cities in the world for more than two decades. Today, I am in Mogadishu, however, I am writing a paper on youth participation in transportation planning using the 2015 City of Toronto *Youth Engagement Strategy* report as a case study. My advisor at the time believed utilizing my work experience in transportation planning and civil, municipal and transportation engineering projects would produce a paper that would not only further the subjects of youth participation and transportation planning but bring awareness to the transportation injustices faced by youth in the City of Toronto.

The City of Toronto has been my home for a decade now. Having been a flâneur for the first couple of years, I found the neighbourhoods of the city unique and filled with culture and character. With over 80 ethnic groups represented in the city, speaking nearly 100 languages, Toronto is one the world's most diverse cities. However, this "diversity" is not reflected in its transportation systems. From my work experience, I have noticed by focusing on traffic fluidity, performance, and fixating on the technical and physical dimensions of transportation, we have neglected the primary purpose behind transportation planning which is about managing the varying travel demands in a way that is economically efficient, environmentally sustainable, and socially equitable.

But why write about youth in transportation planning? In the *Youth Engagement Strategy* report, transit and transportation were the leading issues the youth cared about. When consulted, the youth noted mobility, accessibility, safety, and cost as issues that were important to them. While these issues are experienced globally, the City Planning Division in Toronto has fallen short in improving its relationships with Torontonian youths in city planning initiatives since the *Youth Engagement Strategy* was presented. Thus, by utilizing the principles of critical discourse analysis (CDA) to decode the power relations embedded in the report, I conclude that youth participation is not only about creativity and belief in youth, it is also about power. If we are not willing to receive the ideas of the youth with respect to transportation planning, it is almost better not to solicit their advice.

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

"In a quality city, a person should be able to live their entire life without a car, and not feel deprived" – (Paul Bedford, City of Toronto Planning Director in Nozzi, 2003, p.63).

This Major Research Paper examines the 2015 City of Toronto *Youth Engagement Strategy* report which revealed transportation as the topmost interest for youth. This paper challenges the conception that Torontonian youths are not concerned with transportation planning and contends that youth are valuable stakeholders.

Having amassed over eight years of work experience in both the public and private sector in the fields of civil and transportation engineering, and as a transportation planner since 2018, I have not only observed the limitations of the participatory methods, but seen the social element of transportation planning absent in projects. For instance, I've led and assisted in the development of transportation master plans (TMP), traffic impact studies (TIS), transportation demand management (TDM), and transit-oriented development (TOD), and noticed how the traditional adult-oriented participatory methods used had only served the youth by default. This is concerning as the youth have different preferences and perspectives when it comes to mobility and accessibility.

Even though transportation planners come with good intentions, the participatory methods I have seen as well as participated in have silenced or excluded youths. Reasons for this silencing or exclusion are diverse, however, some scholars contend that youth participation in transportation and mobility planning are less studied (thus less understood) than participation in other areas of public policy and planning (Böhler-Baedeker & Lindenau, 2013). Therefore, this paper aims to bring awareness to the transportation exclusion as an injustice faced by Torontonian youths, by asking: *what role do youth play in transportation planning when teamed with planners, governments, and policy makers? How can youth participate in transportation plans and policies?* To address these two research questions, I utilize critical discourse analysis (CDA) to decode the power relations embedded in the 2015 City of Toronto's *Youth Engagement Strategy* report to allow for a solid understanding of the framework used by planners in their proposed "engagement" with youth and in (dis)locating "transportation" in their planning (or non-planning) for youth.

With today's Torontonian youths coming of age in a city facing multitude of challenges, it is important for transportation planners to start thinking about how they can prepare youth to be committed, empowered, and engaged. As planners, we need to be conscious of the limitations of the participatory methods and shift the decision-making power towards the future beneficiaries of transport services. In choosing this research topic, I hope it brings forth a new transportation process and practice for Torontonian youths. Moreover, I hope this paper will benefit youth groups, urban and transportation planners, academics, and government officials.

CASE STUDY

This paper uses the 2015 City of Toronto *Youth Engagement Strategy* report as a case study to locate the inequalities, power relations and exclusionary practices that are taking place in the engagement process with Torontonian youths.

The City of Toronto is the provincial capital of Ontario and the most populous city in Canada. The city's boundaries (see **Figure 1.1**) are formed by Etobicoke Creek and Highway 427 to the west, Rouge River and Rouge Park to the east, Steeles Avenue to the north and Lake Ontario to the south (City of Toronto, 2020). In Toronto, transportation infrastructure plays a vital role in offering individuals a variety of methods to travel from their homes to work, school, entertainment, and shops. However, within the past decade, there have been many debates in transportation planning, governance, and transit policy in Toronto amongst decision-making stakeholders (Amar & Teelucksingh, 2015).

With over 2.9 million people in the City of Toronto (City of Toronto, 2020), the daily travelling frustrations individuals face are compounded by the other challenges facing the city – namely, affordable housing, gentrification, homelessness, education and employment. Traveling frustrations have been part of Toronto life for the past two decades. Hodge (2007) explains that "roads are congested to the point where peak hours have become a day-long affair. Air pollution from vehicle exhaust and a corresponding concern for the planet's health are at an all-time high. Loss of productivity and delays in shipments in the region's global economy are measured in the millions of dollars per year. Existing transportation infrastructure is deteriorating and future projects seem either paralyzed or non-existent, while the social inequities arising from the uneven development of transportation infrastructure continue to worsen in the City of Toronto" (p. 7).

Over the same time period that these current transportation difficulties have been growing, shifts in the political economy have occurred (Hodge, 2007). Graham and Marvin explain these shifts as "splintering urbanism." The term is described as the rising inequitable allocation of infrastructure networks and systems that leads to the "fragmentation of the social and material fabric of cities" (Graham & Marvin, 2001, p. 33). In Toronto, Roger Keil and Douglas Young note that "highly uneven and potentially unjust" transportation infrastructure, is due to Toronto's transport systems being "underfinanced [and] increasingly decentralized" (Keil & Young, 2005, p. 4). Graham and Marvin believe that "uneven emergence of an array of…premium networked spaces: new or retrofitted transport that are customized precisely to the needs of powerful users and spaces, whilst bypassing less powerful users and spaces" (Graham & Marvin, 2001, p. 11 cited in Hodge, 2007). Citing Jessop (1993) and Peck & Tickell (2002), Hodge (2007) contends that the trends in the shifting nature of infrastructure provision can be linked to a wider, overall pattern of change in the world that includes a shift away from a Keynesian welfare state towards a more neoliberal based style of policy-making and governance, and to a rapidly globalizing economy of international trade and exchange which has led to the formation of a network of global cities (Sassen, 2006 cited in Hodge, 2007).

To support the growing City of Toronto and market it as an important node in the world's economic system, the Ontario Provincial government created the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority (GTTA) in 2006. This integration of systems, now called Metrolinx[1] would offer residents a variety of methods to reach their desired destinations and sought to substantially improve their quality of life. However, this integration of infrastructure has raised numerous concerns of social and spatial justice (Amar & Teelucksingh, 2015). There are concerns of accessibility and distribution of transport networks and availability of transport services between socio-demographic groups that favor high income over low income, and white over racialized and/or immigrant groups. Similar concerns were voiced by Torontonian youths in the City of Toronto 2015 *Youth Engagement Strategy* report written by a consultant team composed of Swerhun Facilitation, Maximum City, and Urban Strategies Inc. who led the youth engagement study process in close collaboration with the City Planning Division.

[1] Metrolinx is an agency of the Government of Ontario under the Metrolinx Act, 2006, created to improve the coordination and integration of all modes of transportation in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) (Metrolinx, 2020).

With the report revealing that Torontonian youths' primary concern was transportation, I contend that youth engagement and participation is key, as they will inherit these transport systems. Sherry Arnstein believes that in the participatory process, decision-makers can push for equity in ways that are helpful to communities and unpack power relations (Arnstein, 1969). This process of public participation will locate where inequities are occurring instead of evaluating who is winning or losing from a transport policy or project (Lee, Sener, & Jones, 2016).

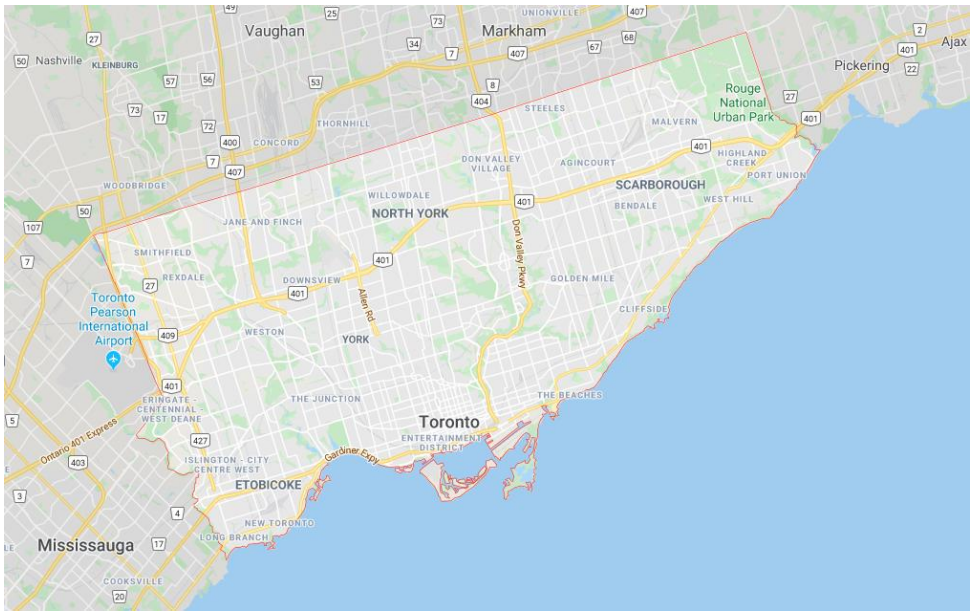

Figure 1.1 City of Toronto Boundary

(City of Toronto, 2020)

RESEARCH DESIGN / METHODOLOGY

In the 2015 City of Toronto *Youth Engagement Strategy*, Toronto City Planning Division, Consultant Team, and the Youth Research Team (YRT) produced the *Youth Engagement Strategy* report, as part of a 6-month study process including three workshops, which discussed strategies to improve youth engagement in city planning. During their consultations, the YRT used a variety of methods, including surveys, pop-up town halls, and facilitated workshops. Their work resulted in over 150 pages of documentation, which will be analyzed in this paper utilizing the eight principles of theory and methods suggested by Fairclough and Wodak (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 279). These are:

1. Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory
2. Discourse is historical
3. Discourse does ideological work
4. Critical discourse analysis addresses social problems
5. Power relations are discursive
6. Discourse constitutes society and culture
7. The link between text and society is mediated
8. Discourse is a form of social action

This paper draws upon Fairclough and Wodak's CDA of eight principles of theory and method to examine the 2015 City of Toronto *Youth Engagement Strategy* and theoretical research. CDA is founded on the notion that text and dialogue play a significant part in sustaining and legitimizing inequality, injustice, and tyranny in society. The paper employs flexible methods of discourse analysis to illustrate how the City Planning Division, Consulting Teams, and the YRT claimed to engage with Torontonian youths, but in fact sabotaged their relationship due to issues of power, voice, and representation. The analysis examines two key points. First, since youth input was sought in the engagement, it is important to look at whether or not decision making occurred collaboratively; that is, between the Planning Division, Consulting Team, and the YRT. Second, it will examine how the engagement with the youth aligned with how it was advertised and whether the aim to empower the youth participants was achieved.

Fairclough and Wodak's eight principles will guide the analysis of the participation strategies used in the *Youth Engagement Strategy*, as well as identify the youth (non) participation reasons, both of which address the above-mentioned research questions. Further, these principles are a vital tool in examining social inequality as it is expressed, signaled, constituted, legitimized by the language used in the report. I identify the patterns of power undercurrents, discourse and disjunctions that need to be described, interpreted, and explained in the 2015 City of Toronto *Youth Engagement Strategy*.

The theoretical framework component of my research will support the analysis of the 2015 City of Toronto *Youth Engagement Strategy* report. The purpose of exercising this methodology is to gain a comprehensive understanding of planning from both an academic and a pragmatic angle to better address youth participation in transportation planning. Examining literature on

transportation planning, youth participation and CDA will give foreshadowed analysis a sound methodical foundation and demonstrate an understanding of existing knowledge. Moreover, this research allows for an informed critic of transportation planning's normative traditions that emphasize its narrow frames of youth participation to better delineate the boundaries between transportation planning and practice.

ORGANIZATION OF RESEARCH PAPER

The paper is organized into four chapters, each of which builds on the previous. Following this Introduction, Chapter 2 starts by describing youth participation as a critical concept for understanding youth activity. The concept of youth participation, whether under the name of youth voice, decision making, empowerment, engagement, or participation, has become a hot topic in recent years (O'Donoghue, Kirshner, & McLaughlin, 2003). The chapter goes on to identify and critique five youth participation models, from which the *Youth Engagement Strategy* borrows. The last part of the chapter introduces five City of Toronto youth activists who are making institutions more accountable through consciousness raising, organizing and political action. These youth activists are presented as a way to demonstrate youth capacity and the important role youth can play in current planning efforts given that they will be most affected by the long-term impacts of planning decisions. The final part of the chapter also considers technology in youth participation.

Chapter 3 sets the foundation of my review and analysis of the 2015 City of Toronto *Youth Engagement Strategy* report. The chapter begins by delving into the theoretical literature of CDA. This chapter is crucial as it analyzes the framework used by planners in their "engagement" with youth in their planning (non-planning). Additionally, in utilizing Fairclough and Wodak's eight principles and the CDA lenses, this chapter looks at "youth engagement" and addresses three fundamental questions: *Are we ready to take young people's views into account? Are we ready to let young people into the decision-making process? And are we ready to share some of the adult power with young people?*

In Chapter 4, I look at transportation planning, as it was the number one concern revealed by Torontonian youth in the 2015 City of Toronto *Youth Engagement Strategy* report. This Chapter begins with defining transportation planning, then explores youth participation in transportation planning and addresses the following: *What role do youth play in transportation planning when*

teamed with planners, governments, and policy makers? How can youth participate in transportation plans and policies in the City of Toronto? This chapter unpacks transportation planning epistemology and approaches that undergird youth participation in transportation planning, along with the approaches taken by planners in providing design spaces, awareness and knowledge about transportation planning, as well as the skills to voice and generate spatial ideas. Lastly, this chapter provides concluding remarks and recommendations to better address youth participation in transportation planning.

Taken together, these chapters will reveal the flaws of transportation planning's normative traditions that emphasize its narrow frames for youth participation. I hope in examining these linkages between transportation planning and youth participation that a new transportation process for youth comes into practice.

CHAPTER 2 – WHAT IS YOUTH PARTICIPATION?

"Young people are crying out to be involved and to be heard. What do we do?" – (Sonti, 2017)

For the purpose of this paper, the terms participation, engagement, or youth voice refer to the involvement of children, youth, and young people in the decision-making process on matters that affect their lives. This chapter defines youth participation, examines youth participation models, highlights City of Toronto youth activists, and the role of technology in youth participation.

WHAT IS YOUTH PARTICIPATION

The theory of youth participation, whether under the name of youth engagement, participation or youth voice, has become a hot topic in recent years (O'Donoghue, Kirshner, & McLaughlin, 2003) and has gained comprehensive and multidisciplinary endorsement amongst scholars and practitioners alike. Yet the question remains as to what participation looks like, how it operates, and where it is taking place. This section will address these questions as well as offer a synopsis of what we know about youth participation.

In order to define youth participation, one must first define youth and participation separately as they are both broad in discipline and different fields of practice. The idea of youth as a distinct stage of life was conceived by G. Stanley Hall at the beginning of the 20th century, and, as we approach the 21st century, the controversy continues as to what was actually discovered (Côté & Allahar, 1994). Much of the literature about youth has inherited assumptions from developmental psychology on the universal stages of development, identity formation, normative behavior and the relationship between social and physical maturation (Wynn & White, 1997). Pierre Bourdieu (1978 cited in Jones, 2009, p. 1), says "youth is just a word" and an evolving concept, layered upon layers with values which reflect contemporary moral, political, and social concerns. The United Nations, on the other hand, defines youth as a period of shift from dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence (UN, 2020). Both definitions of youth indicate that youth is an interpersonal concept that exists and takes meaning largely in relation to

the concept of adulthood. This idea of youth is evident in the positioning of young people as requiring guidance and expert attention to ensure that the process of becoming an adult is conducted correctly. This negative construction of the meaning of youth is a form of oppression, referred to as either ageism or "adultism" (MacNeil, 2006, p. 32). Not only does one group (adults) have the power to construct the definition of another group (youth), but they also have the power to act on those definitions, to create structures that reinforce and reconfirm the very beliefs they have constructed (MacNeil, 2006, p. 32).

Definitions of youth by age differ significantly across different institutions and countries; the UN, for example, defines youth as person from 15 to 24 years of age (Department for International Development, 2010), China Youth Policy defines youth as persons from 14 to 28 years old, while the National Youth Policy of Nepal defines youth as persons from 16 to 40 years of age (Nepal Government, 2015). In other countries, the experience of youth is continuously changing as young people actively construct their own group identities, priorities, and perspectives due to varying circumstances. Wynn & White (1997) explain that while "age is seen as a concept which is assumed to refer to a biological reality" (p. 10), the meaning and the experience of age and the process of aging is subject to historical and cultural processes.

In searching through Canada's *Youth Policy* for a definition of *youth* and *age* to use for this paper, it was surprising to find that the youth age was not defined at all in the *2019 Canadian Youth Policy Report*. According to a 2010 paper by United Way of Calgary and Area, the Federal Government used multiple definitions to define youth age: Statistics Canada defines youth between 16-28 years, whereas for Human Resources and Skills Development Canada defined youth to include those who are between 15-24 (YouthPolicy, 2020). In Toronto, the Planning Division in the 2015 *Youth Engagement Strategy* defined youth as being between 18-30 years old (City of Toronto, 2015). In this document, the Toronto definition of youth is used.

Similar to "youth", "participation" is a broad concept with wide-ranging definitions (Lane, 1995), and with different meanings (Hussein, 1995). Agarwal (2001) explains that "views diverge on how participation is defined…[and] whom it is expected to involve, what is expected to achieve, and how it is brought about" (p. 1624). Similarly, Pelling (1998) explains "participation is an ideologically contested concept producing a range of competing meanings and applications" (p. 476).

While participation on its own is inherently complex, there exists cohesive literature on the meaning of "community participation". For instance, Rifkin, Muller, & Bichmann (1988) define community participation as "a social process whereby specific groups with shared needs living in a defined geographic area actively pursue identification of their needs, take decisions and establish mechanisms to meet these need" (cited in Ndekha, et al., 2003, p. 326). Devas & Grant (2003) state that "citizen participation is about the ways in which citizens exercise influence and control over the decisions that affect them" (p. 309). In the context of development, for participation to be meaningful, individuals and groups need to be involved at all stages of the development process (Lane, 1995). This type of participation refers to an active process whereby beneficiaries influence the direction and execution of a development project with a view of enhancing their well-being in terms of income, personal growth, self-reliance, or other values they cherish, rather than merely receive a share of project profits (Samuel, 1987). Thus, to make certain that vulnerable groups have the power to challenge the source of underdevelopment is to empower them to impact all decisions, at all levels, that affect their lives (Lane, 1995). For genuine participation to occur, power and influence are to be divided by all the participants in projects.

Thus, using the preceding definition of community participation, youth participation could be defined as the involvement of future generations in the planning, design, and implementation of a development project. This means that youth are trained, organized and supported to handle resources and contribute to a decision that affects their lives. Barry Checkoway, a scholar in youth studies, states "when young people participate, it draws upon their expertise, enables them to exercise their rights as citizens, and contributes to a more democratic society…[and] youth participation promotes their personal development and provides them with substantive knowledge and practical skills" (Checkoway, 2011, p. 340).

Banaji and Buckingham (2010) write that numerous research and studies have been done in the field of youth participation since the 1990s. Frank (2006) believes that there has been awareness in the field of youth studies since the 1970s which was prompted by the planning advocacy movement. In city planning, Francis & Lorenzo (2002) note that there has been a prolonged evolution of youth in planning, and the practice to include youth began to develop towards institutionalization in the early 2000s. Yet, youth participation continues to be a challenge for urban planners (Hörschelmann & Van Blerk, 2012). Percy-Smith (2010) mentions that the formal planning process has failed to include young people, which Francis and Lorenzo see as the

outcome of the 'adultization' of childhood (Francis & Lorenzo, 2002, p. 159). The segregation of youth from the planning process is also believed to be the result of the growing amount of time spent in institutions (Francis & Lorenzo, 2002). Francis and Lorenzo (2002) theorize that youth nowadays spend more planned time in school or in organized activities than youth of the past. The little amount of free time left in their day, which hasn't been taken up by institutions is normally under the supervision of an adult, or in front of either a computer or a television. Francis and Lorenzo add that public space has become increasingly privatized and thus, youth barely have access to wander their neighborhood freely (Francis & Lorenzo, 2002). These structural barriers for lack of youth participation is due to the dominant presence of these institutions and the overrepresentation of economic interests in discussion processes which has resulted in lack of knowledge of needs and interests of youth (Heinrich & Million, 2016).

Torontonian youths are largely underrepresented and are rarely included in government or community decisions which affect them (City of Toronto, 2015). As a result, the City of Toronto Planning Division has made an effort to empower youth through the 2015 *Youth Engagement Strategy* report which sought to bring awareness to the missing voices of Torontonian youths in the planning process, where homeowners over the age of 55 have typically dominated the conversation. The Toronto Planning Division recognizes that traditional methods of public participation are simply not working. Innes & Booher (2000, p. 2) say:

> "the traditional methods do not achieve genuine participation in planning or decisions; they do not provide significant information to public officials that makes a difference to their actions; they do not satisfy members of the public that they are being heard; they do not improve the decisions that agencies and public officials make; and they don't represent a broad spectrum of the public. Worse yet, they often antagonize the members of the public who do try to work through these methods. Moreover, they pit members of the public against each other as they each feel compelled to speak of the issues in polarizing terms to get their points across — making it even more difficult for decision makers to sort through what they hear, much less to make a choice. Most often these methods discourage busy and thoughtful individuals from wasting their time in going through what appear to be nothing more than rituals designed to satisfy legal requirements."

Following Innes & Booher's observations about the limits of methods of participation, it is worth noting the importance of, and need for a paradigm shift regarding the participation of Torontonian youths. Their participation in city planning using more novel and youth-friendly paradigms is crucial because they will be the most affected by the long-term impacts of any changes in the landscape of the cities in which they live. Enrique Penalosa, former mayor of Bogota, Colombia stated that "children are a kind of indicator species; if we can build a successful city for children, we will have a successful city for all people" (Laker, 2018). Louise Chawla an environmental psychologist whose work concentrates on the benefits of access to nature for children, the development of active care for the natural world, and participatory methods for engaging children and youth in design and planning (Humans & Nature, 2020) tells us, children are our "bridge to the future" because they have the most time ahead of them (Chawla, 2002, p. 13). If they are shown sustainable planning at a young age, they will gain the necessary skills and attitudes to ensure that we will have environmental protection for generations to come (Chawla, 2002). Further, youth participation will set up lifelong habits of environmental interest, concern, and care; moreover, their forces government officials to think of sustainable planning in a more nuanced way that they may not have considered had there not been youth stakeholders at the table (Chawla, 2002).

YOUTH PARTICIPATION MODELS

To date, various participation models have been proposed to assist those who want to involve young people in program design, delivery and evaluation (Cahill & Dadvand, 2018). These models tend to classify participatory practices, and often use hierarchical structures which do not account well for the socio-cultural contexts in which participation takes place (Cahill & Dadvand, 2018). This section reviews Sherry Arnstein – *Ladder of Citizen Participation*, Roger Hart – *Ladder of Children Participation*, Phil Treseder – *Degrees of Participation*, Harry Shier – *Pathways to Participation*, Jans & Backer – *Triangle of Youth Participation*, and David Driskell – *Dimension of Youth Participation*.

Though there are numerous participation models, my purpose for reviewing these specific participation models is due to the 2015 City of Toronto *Youth Engagement Strategy* report, which adopts elements of each of the above-mentioned models. The *Youth Engagement Strategy* uses a

policy framework beginning with a vision to mobilize youths to engage in city building, followed by a series of nine guiding principles which are aimed to guide all of Toronto's Planning Division engagement efforts with youth. These participation models are reviewed in order to highlight their differences and similarities and to show each model's simplicity and associated limitations.

SHERRY ARNSTEIN – LADDER OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Sherry R. Arnstein's *Ladder of Citizen Participation* was first published in July 1969 in the *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*. In this work, Arnstein discusses the typology of citizen's participation from her experiences with federal social programs including urban renewal, anti-poverty, and model cities (Theyyan, 2018). Her model emphasizes that "participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless (Arnstein, 1969, p. 216)." More notably, Arnstein's model encourages social reform among people which enables them to share in the benefits of the affluent society (Arnstein, 1971).

The typology of Arnstein's eight levels of participation is arranged in a ladder pattern with each rung corresponding to the extent of citizens power (see **Figure 2.1**). According to Arnstein:

> "the bottom rungs are described as levels of "non-participation" that have been arranged for genuine participation. The real objective in this rung is not to enable people to participate in planning, but to enable powerholders to "educate" the participants. Rungs three and four progress to levels of "tokenism" that allow the have-nots to hear and to have a voice. In these levels, participants lack the power to ensure that their views will be heeded by the powerful. Moreover, in this level, participation is restricted, and no assurance is provided of changing the status quo. Rung five is simply a higher level of tokenism because the ground rules allow have-nots to advise but retain for the powerholders the continued right to decide. Further up the ladder, citizens can enter a partnership that enables them to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional power holders. Arnstein concludes, the topmost rungs, delegated power and citizen control, have-not citizens obtain the majority of decision-making seats, or full managerial power. (Arnstein, 2019, pp. 25-26)"

Despite the work of Arnstein, the model has revealed that citizen power is not distributed as neatly as the divisions suggest and that some significant roadblocks are omitted, such as the

racism, paternalism and struggle of some power holders and the lack of resources and disorganization of many low-income communities (Theyyan, 2018). What Arnstein's model has shown is the complexity of the ladder of participation. It is evident through its hierarchical nature that the rungs of the ladder suggest no logical progression from one level to another. The ladder-based approach sees participation as a stable outcome of a process, ignoring the struggles over participatory complexities within these processes, the particular fields, and society itself (Carpentier, 2016). Different actors have varying perspectives and interests; and thus, each developing strategies to realize their individualized goals, fostering conflict amongst each other (Carpentier, 2016).

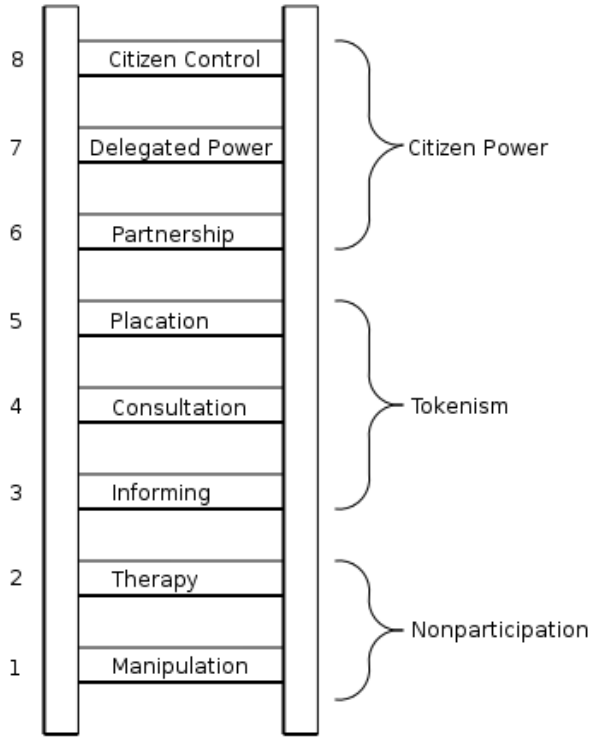

Figure 2.1 Ladder of Citizen Participation

(Arnstein, 1971)

ROGER HART – LADDER OF CHILDREN PARTICIPATION

The Ladder of Children Participation (see **Figure 2.2**) is a model developed by Roger Hart in 1992, which identifies eight levels of children's participation in projects. Since Hart's ladder is about children, not youth, it is presented in this document because of the Planning Division mobilizing youths for participation and decision-making.

Hart's model is intended to promote those working with children to carefully consider the nature and intention of children's participation in community activities (Hart R. , 1992). By applying the theoretical framework of Sherry Arnstein's *Ladder of Citizen Participation* to the participation of children in adult projects, programs, and activities, Hart's ladder became a powerful and widely used model in the fields of civic participation, child development, and democratic decision-making (Organizing Engagement, 2020). In his illustration of the eight rungs, Hart argues that "authentic participation should not be complicated with actions such as children's dance, music or theatre performance in which children act out predetermined roles in projects designed by adults. Such performances, while they may be worthwhile in themselves and a positive experience for children and adults alike, need to be recognized for what they are: "performances" (Hart R. , 1992, p. 9).

According to Hart, it is important to begin by noting that the ladder of participation addresses only a rather narrow range of ways that most children in the world participate in their communities. Hart adds, the ladder focuses on programs or projects, rather than on children's everyday informal participation in their communities. Therefore, it is largely limited to describing the varying roles adults play in relation to children's participation. This is because the ladder was drawn from the perspective of an author living and working in the 'Minority World' where, at this point in history, children's participation in meaningful community activity is limited to formal programming of their activities by adults (Hart R. , 2008, p. 20).

Hart also points to the need to recognize the ever-changing world of the young and to adjust meaningfully to these changes. "[It] is a struggle to find ways of working with young people and that we must work on this with the youth themselves. More important than what any static model like 'the ladder' looks like is the recognition that we must be engaged in a never-ending process of working across generations to generate improved ways of adults and children working together, both on the realization of children's rights but also on their shared involvement in the future of their communities" (Hart R. , 2008, p. 29). Any planning division then, including the City of

Toronto, would need to be at par with youth practices, to acknowledge fluidity of these practices and adapt changes that will strategically facilitate youth continued engagement.

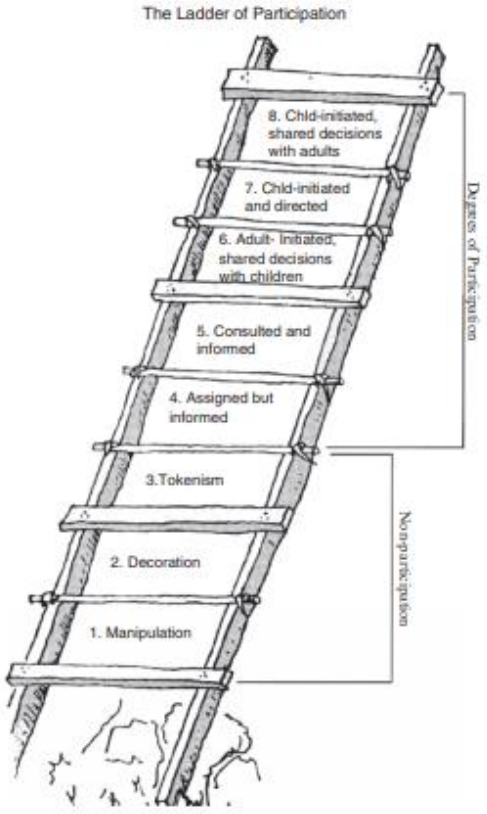

Figure 2.2 Ladder of Children Participation

(Hart R. , 2008)

PHIL TRESEDER – DEGREES OF PARTICIPATION

Phil Treseder's model (see **Figure 2.3**) is an important model to study when examining the *Youth Engagement Strategy* as it re-works the five degrees of participation from Hart's ladder of youth participation in two significant ways. Firstly, Treseder steps away from and responds to some of the most frequent criticism of the ladder metaphor, aiming to illustrate that there is neither a progressive hierarchy nor a particular sequence in which participation should always be developed (Karsten, 2011). Secondly, Treseder makes a point that there should be no limit to the involvement of children and young people (Karsten, 2011).

Treseder frames his model on the five conditions outlined in David Hodgson's 1995 *Participation of children and young people in social work*, however, Treseder elaborates to illustrate the linked stages of the participation process. David Hodgson stipulates that young people need to have (1) access to those in power as well as (2) access to relevant information; and are presented (3) real choices between different options; along with (4) support from a trusted, independent person; and lastly (5) a means of appeal or complaint if anything goes wrong (Hodgson D., 1995 cited in Karsten, 2011). Thus, if the City of Toronto Planning Division is to "create a framework that will mobilize a generation to take ownership of and become active on planning issues" (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 5), then the Planning Division must shift away from the hierarchy process formed in their engagement with Torontonian youths and invest in the youths so they can acquire skills to fully engage with the planning process.

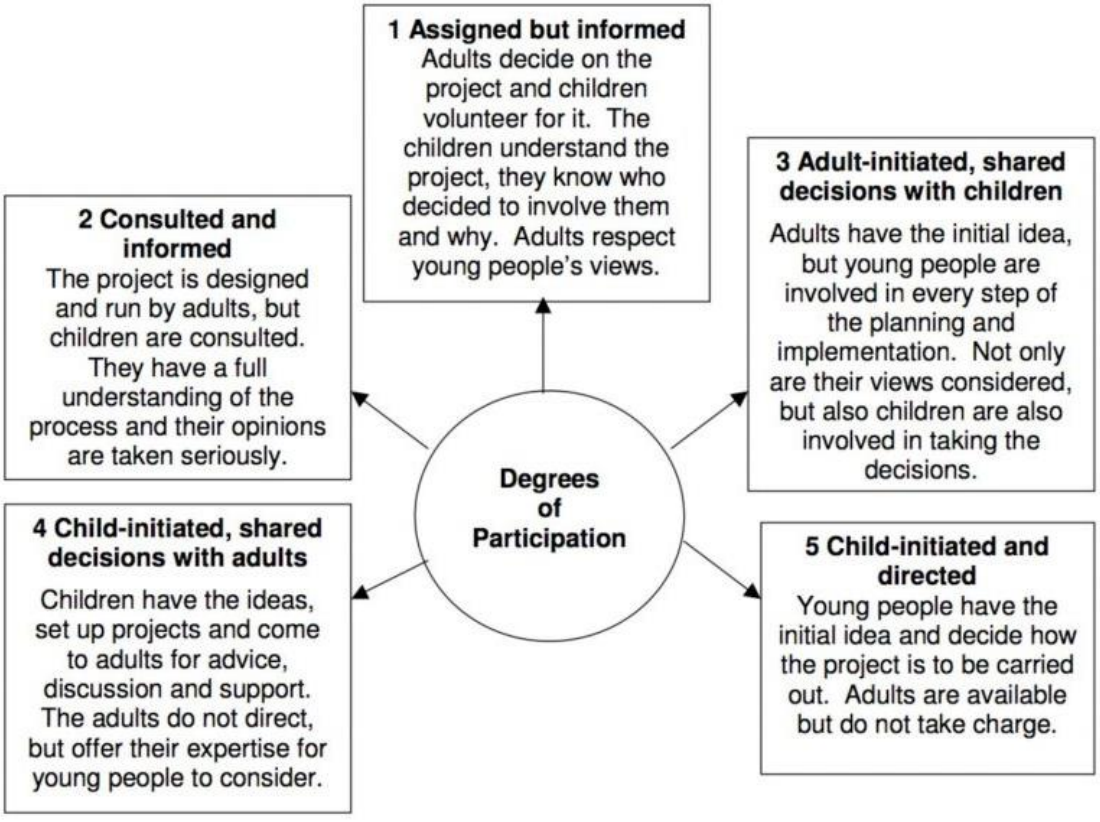

Figure 2.3 Degrees of Participation

(Karsten, 2011, p. 28)

HARRY SHIER – PATHWAYS OF PARTICIPATION

Pathways of Participation model (see **Figure 2.4**) was developed by Harry Shier and first published in *Children & Society* in 2001. The model builds on Sherry Arnstein's *Ladder of Citizen Participation* and Roger Hart's *Ladder of Children's Participation*. Shier's model is examined for this report as it offers an additional tool for practitioners, helping them to explore different aspects of the participation process (Shier, 2001). The model is helpful in evaluating the commitment and assurance to youth participation by the consulting teams composed of Swerhun Facilitation, Maximum City, and Urban Strategies Inc.

Empowerment is a multi-level concept consisting of practical approaches and applications, social action process, individual and collective outcomes (Jennings, Medina-Parra, Messias, & McLoughlin, 2006). Shier's five level model of participation proposes a set of questions for effective youth participation. By asking these questions, youth will feel they are making a difference and having an impact (Brodie, et al., 2011). Youth control is manifested through youth taking responsibility, voicing their opinions, making decisions, and taking action to achieve their goal (Jennings, Medina-Parra, Messias, & McLoughlin, 2006). Shier's model reflects the premise that exposing youth to opportunities and challenges within a safe and supportive environment can result in learning and empowerment.

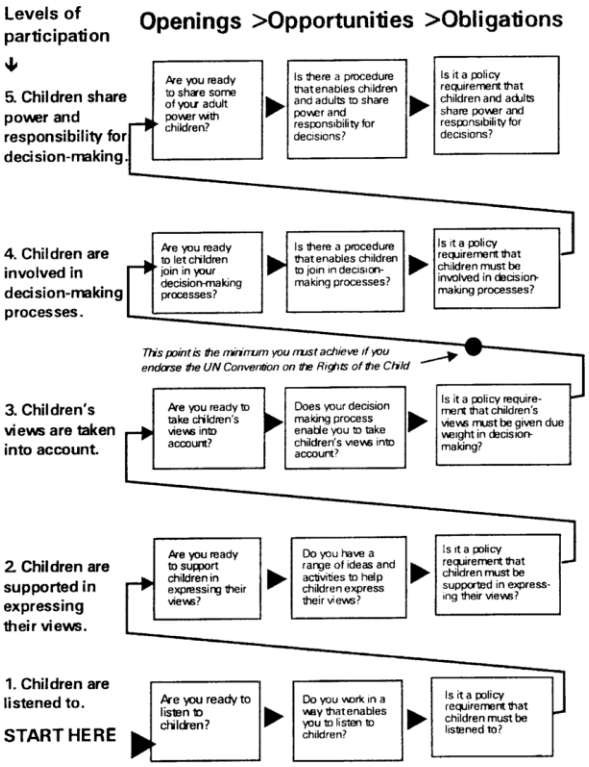

Figure 2.4 Pathways of Participation (Shier, 2001)

JANS & BACKER – TRIANGLE OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Marc Jans and Kurt de Backer's triangle of youth participation (see **Figure 2.5**) centers on three fundamental aspects: challenge, capacity and connection (De Backer & Jans, 2002). Jans and Backer suggest that in order for young people to 'actively' participate in society, these three dimensions need to be clear, understood, and communicated. It is then, and only then, when each aspect of the triangular model is met that young people will be in a position to fully participate (Grace & Grace, 2020).

This model is essential in the study of youth as youth face numerous barriers, with the most obvious being the dominant presence of adults in these institutions. According to the City Planning Division in the *Youth Engagement Strategy*, the top three barriers to youth being engaged in the planning process are trust, transparency, and intimidation. The Planning Division confirms that youth in Toronto feel unqualified to critique or participate in discussions in 'adult' dominated arenas (City of Toronto, 2015). For young people to fully participate and be engaged in planning, equitable power-sharing between youth and adults is required as well as a welcoming and safe environment.

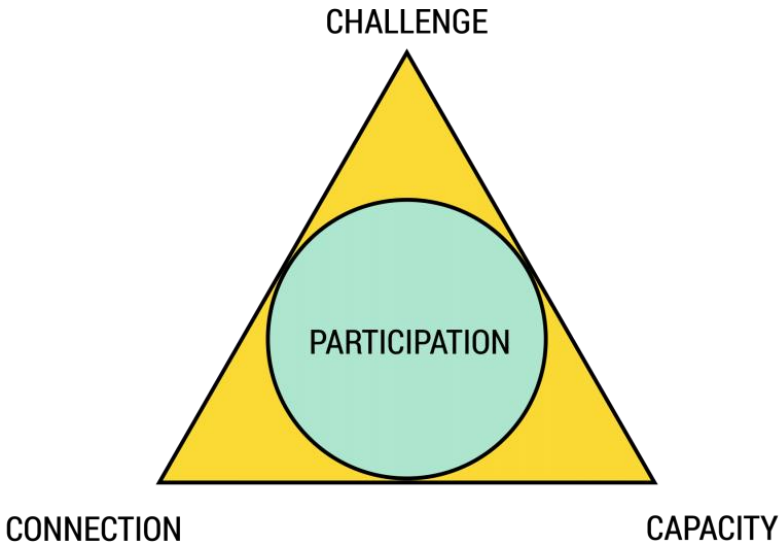

Figure 2.5 Triangle of Youth Participation
(De Backer & Jans, 2002)

DAVID DRISKELL – DIMENSION OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Driskell's dimensions of youth participation (see **Figure 2.6**) was developed within the framework of a practical manual on how to conceptualize, structure, and facilitate youth participation in community development (Karsten, 2011 cited in Driskell, 2002). Driskell's model borrows from both Arnstein and Hart's eight degrees of participation and non-participation, rearranging the methodologies in a conceptual framework focusing on two dimensions: first, the power of young people to make decisions and affect change, and second, the interaction of young people with others in their community (Karsten, 2011 cited in Driskell, 2002). Driskell asserts that participation without some degree of power sharing is tokenism and that to achieve collaboration from youth, participation must offer youth equitable power.

Opportunities for Torontonian youth to take part in purposeful projects whereby the youths make a genuine impact is critical. Youth need to participate in activities related to their own lives, that motivate and challenge them, and "count as real" (Heath & McLaughlin, 1994, p. 289). Kim, et al., (1998) emphasized the concept that projects need to encourage underlying competence and genuine motivations of youth so that they can assess and master their own interests, develop skills, and gain confidence.

In his model, Driskell argues that while it is a powerful experience for young people to be fully in charge of their own projects, they are only allowed to do so for smaller projects. Yet, when young people are treated as equals and valued partners through shared decision-making, influence can then be gained on larger issues, and the power to make decisions and affect change can be maximized (Karsten, 2011 cited in Driskell, 2002). Thus, in evaluating the outcomes of the *Youth Engagement Strategy* the following chapter will gauge the dimensions of youth participation in the City of Toronto Planning Division's approach to youth engagement.

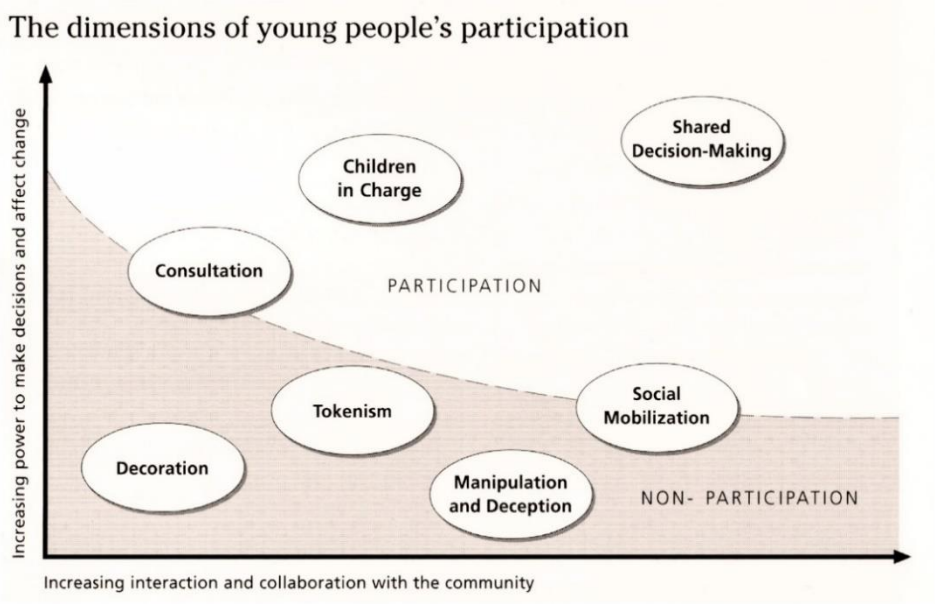

Figure 2.6 Dimension of Youth Participation

(Driskell, 2002)

All six of the youth participation models discussed share a commonality in demonstrating the inherent hierarchical nature, and the challenge of achieving purposeful and meaningful youth engagement. To have equitable youth participation, we need to move away from the illusion of participation, or tokenism", towards a more genuine and impactful youth influence. Youth participation should not be evaluated on the idea of decision-making as the key element, rather, it should be based on support mechanisms such as mentorship and skills development.

YOUTH ACTIVISTS

Young activists in the City of Toronto have been at the forefront of numerous social movements that have made their way onto all screens and on every social media platform. Associate Professor Jessica Taft of Latin American and Latino Studies in UC Santa Cruz has made known that "around the world, we are seeing youth engage as social, political, and economic actors, demonstrating their capacity to help make social change (McNulty, 2019)." Taft adds, "adults make a lot of assumptions about children and what they're capable of, and those assumptions are often quite false (McNulty, 2019)." Thus, this section focuses on five youth

activists in Toronto who are changing the city in their own way through participating in not only civic duties, but also social, environmental, economic and political activities.

The purpose of highlighting these five activists is to bring to the forefront that youth of today are demanding action as well as a change in engagement in the City of Toronto. Youth are realizing that they are their own group's most effective representatives. Even though adults can be supportive or even partners, youths are playing a more dominant role in determining their own initiatives, as they are in the best position to share their interpretations. As previously stated, youths and adults have different interests when it comes to their surroundings and communities, especially in the use of public spaces. These five youth activists illustrate why youth deserve to be invited to have a seat at the table where decisions are being made.

VISHAL VIJAY

Vishal Vijay is a children's right activist, student, and CEO of EveryChildNow, a youth-run national nonprofit he founded in 2012 that empowers kids to help other kids and provides them with their basic needs (clean water, food, shelter, education, healthcare) (EveryChildNow, 2020). At 19 years old, Vishal is leading a movement to engage Gen Z in philanthropy and social impact. Through collaborations with the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (created a permanent children's rights exhibit), WE Charity (served as the youngest Youth Board Member) and other humanitarian leaders, Vijay has impacted more than 500,000 people, raised $100,000 in philanthropic capital (donations), and has helped uplift thousands of families out of the cycle of poverty. With one-on-one interviews with Kofi Annan, Magic Johnson, Margaret Trudeau, Vicente Fox and more, Vijay has leveraged his experiences to inspire young people to follow their passion and join him in creating a culture of caring (Vijay, n.d.).

> *"Our generation has a genuine interest in social impact and youth will not wait to make a change. We feel the responsibility now* (Low, 2019)*."* – Vishal Vijay

RAYNE FISHER-QUAN

Rayne Fisher-Quan is a sex-ed youth activist. On September 21, 2018, Rayne organized a walkout of more than 100,000 high school students when the Ontario government repealed a 2015 rewrite of the sex education curriculum (Fisher-Quann, n.d.). Rayne was sixteen at the time, and

since then has dedicated herself to advocating for the rights of women and girls around the world and inspiring other young people to fight for what they believe in (Fisher-Quann, n.d.).

Rayne and her work have been profiled in Teen Vogue, VICE, the Huffington Post, the CBC, the Walrus, Refinery29, Chatelaine, FLARE, and many more (Fisher-Quann, n.d.). Her writing has been featured in Refinery29, CBC News, the Toronto Star, and more. She was named one of Canada's Most Powerful Women in 2018 by Refinery29 as well as a Woman of the Year by Chatelaine and profiled in FLARE's "How I Made It" series in 2019. She is a TEDx speaker and has worked with, and contributed to, the United Nations, UNICEF, and PLAN International (Fisher-Quann, n.d.).

Presently, Rayne is self-employed doing speaking, contracting, consultation, and workshops around the world (Fisher-Quann, n.d.). Her areas of expertise include cross-contextual social media usage, youth activation, sexual education, gender-based violence, the intersections of activism and technology, and climate justice. She currently runs national media and communications for Climate Strike Canada and oversees several social media accounts with tens of thousands of followers (Fisher-Quann, n.d.).

> *"Young people are the most powerful force on the planet. We have tools at our disposal that previous generations couldn't even imagine, and the most important of those is social media* (Low, 2019)*."* – Rayne Fisher-Quan

> *"It's possible to unite hundreds of thousands of people with the click of a button now, and that's what we're seeing happen right before our eyes. We're using it to change the world* (Low, 2019)*."* – Rayne Fisher-Quan

YASMIN RAJABI

Yasmin Rajabi's passion for community activism led her to start *Young Women's Leadership Network* (YWLN), a non-profit organization which helps young women over the age of 14 build their leadership skills through civic engagement. Her interests in how local governments work led her to become a City of Toronto protégée – a mentor guiding and supporting women by providing first-hand experience in municipal politics.

Currently, Yasmin is a project officer for the Brookfield Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship's (BII+E) Policy Innovation Platform where she uses innovative tools to engage citizens and communities in the development of policies, programs, and services (Brookfield Institute, 2020). Prior to joining BII+E, Yasmin worked as a facilitator for many strategic initiatives including Metrolinx's 2041 Draft Regional Transportation Plan, the City of Toronto's Planning Review Panel and OCASI's Gender Based Violence (Brookfield Institute, 2020).

> *"My passion for change leads me to fight for more equitable and fair environments for all* (Russell, 2018)*"* – Yasmin Rajabi

> *"I am someone who's very invested in my community. I'm a very action-oriented individual with a passion for change that leads me to fight for more equitable and fair environments for all* (Russell, 2018)*."* – Yasmin Rajabi

JOSEPH SMITH & DWAYNE BROWN

Joseph Smith and Dwayne Brown are best friends and co-founders of *Generation Chosen*, a weekly after-school program for teens in the Jane and Finch community (Anchan, 2018). Every Tuesday night, youth and young adults in Toronto join the program at Emery Collegiate Institute, to participate in emotional intelligence and educational seminars on financial literacy, entrepreneurship, life skills, co-op and credit recovery (Generation Chosen, 2020).

The Jane and Finch community is an inner-suburban neighborhood located in the northwest of Toronto. Developed in the 1960s, the neighborhood has experienced considerable waves of immigration coming from the Caribbean, East Asia, South Asia, Africa and South America (Ahmadi, 2017). The neighborhood currently accommodates more youth, single-parent families, refugees, individuals without a secondary-school diploma, low-income households, and public housing tenants than any other neighborhood in Toronto (Ahmadi, 2017). As a result, the primary facilitators and organizers of Generation Chosen cater to the specific needs of racialized, marginalized and disenfranchised inner-city youth in that community.

“It really is a matter of life and death for a lot of these youths in these disenfranchised communities to have a place where they can be free, where they can express themselves, where they can release some of that energy (Kurek, 2018)*.”* – Dwayne Brown

"What happens when you grow up in a marginalized community is that you really do feel isolated from the rest of the world. You really do feel like certain spaces are not allotted or built for you (Anchan, 2018)*."* – Joseph Smith

ALIÉNOR ROUGEOT

Aliénor (“Allie”) Rougeot is a climate justice advocate. Her activism started with simple, yet effective acts: circulating petitions, giving presentations on protecting endangered species, and leading campaigns to cut the use of plastic bottles on campus at University of Toronto (Low, 2019). Since January 2019 she has been the lead coordinator of the *Fridays for Future* movement in Toronto (Elevate, 2020). *Fridays for Future* is a worldwide movement where students around the world have been striking and protesting to demand bold climate action from all levels of government. Allie has been recognized for her work by the Canadian Voice of Women for peace with the Kim Phuc Youth Award, and has appeared several times in the Toronto Star, on Metro Morning, CTV, Global News, Radio Canada, National Observer and other media (Elevate, 2020).

“We’re not just fighting because we care about trees, we’re fighting because everything we love, every person we love is at risk here (Low, 2019)*.”* – Aliénor Rougeot

“The world is so unsafe… but it's going into a more unsafe space, and we have scientific models to show that (CBC NEWS, 2019)*.”* – Aliénor Rougeot

What these five youth activists have shown in their work and passion is that youth engagement is a crucial principle to youth as well as community development. Young people throughout the world are joining together to demand a voice in the decisions that affect their lives and their communities. In the process, they are transforming policies and making institutions more accountable through consciousness raising, organizing, and political action (Ginwright & James, 2002). According to Nakamura, “youth can be vitally engaged in almost any sphere of activity

including music, politics, the arts, and community work" (Pancer, Rose-Krasnor, & Loiselle, 2002, p. 48). Young people benefit by gaining skills and knowledge, while adults benefit by enhancing their own experiences and learning to better understand and value youth. What this will mean for the City of Toronto and its communities is that programs will improve and in turn, the quality of life will also improve. Young people want to be involved and want to play a critical role in the decision-making process that affects their lives. Young people are the future and need to be agents of their own future and change.

TECHNOLOGY AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION

This section will conclude this chapter by discussing the role of technology in youth participation. As a user of numerous digital platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube), I have seen how technology has opened doors, connected people, and provided opportunities. When it comes to youth and technology, the creative potential and platform has proven to be a mighty force to having their voices heard in city planning decisions.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, several participation models have been proposed to aid those who want to involve young people in program design, delivery, and evaluation. Unfortunately, the models often use hierarchical structures that fail to account for the socio-cultural contexts in which participation takes place (Cahill & Dadvand, 2018). All the models presented as well as participation methods which presently exist have been non-digital, and labeled ‘‘traditional’’ (Evans-Cowley & Hollander, 2010), in spite of widespread recognition over the last ten years of the opportunities for more citizens to become engaged in the planning system by embracing technology (Le Dantec, Asad, Misra, & Watkins, 2015). In a study done by Wilson, Tewdwr-Jones, and Comber, they assessed opportunities of utilizing digital technology and recognized the many benefits of introducing technological methods such as wearable devices to planning participation (Wilson, Tewdwr-Jones, & Comber, 2017). Conroy and Gordon (2004) agree that technology-based approaches to public meetings can lead to greater knowledge, commitment, and satisfaction levels than traditional public meetings.

Beierle and Cayford (2002) advised that Arnstein's highly influential and often cited ladder of public participation remains a useful model to benchmark the outcome and impact of social media participation. In his article, Lee recognizes that social media creates new channels for young

people to engage with civic and political issues outside the confines of traditional public institutions (Lee A. , 2018). Similarly to Lee, Eunyi Kim investigated how the use of different types of social media, such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, affects public participation, drawing on the theory of motivation, which addresses the effect of internal and external political efficacy as well as the perceived political importance of social media (Kim E. , 2015). Kim's findings showed that the impact of social media use on public participation is statistically significant and positive. Kim also adds, to improve the communication and interaction with young people, politicians and policy makers must also pay closer attention to the variation in the impact of different social media channels on public participation (Kim E. , 2015, p. 227).

The optimists argue that the internet lowers information costs, enhances people's sense of efficacy by its interactivity (Chadwick, 2006), and facilitates online mobilization (Earl & Kimport, 2011). The skeptics, in contrast, argue that the internet presents a ''high choice environment'' that generates higher levels of audience selectivity (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008, p. 717). It facilitates the political junkies to stay even closer to politics, while also allowing the uninterested to stay further away (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008). The result is the widening of the existing knowledge and participation gaps among groups of citizens (Davis, 1999; Prior, 2007).

Embracing digital technology as a means by which the youth can more readily understand planning and raise awareness of the opportunities for participation contributes to the removal of barriers to citizen engagement in the planning process, and thereby allows a more accessible method for the public to potentially shape their neighborhood's future (Bartlett, 2005). Despite the hopefulness, however, other scholars believe that genuine participation is the exception rather than the rule (Bartlett, 2005). Youth participate in small, temporary projects or in marginal roles (Bartlett, 2005). In most cases, city officials view the inclusion of children as more of an educational tool for the children than a resource for the city. When cities attempt to embrace youth, tokenistic gestures are common.

Too often Torontonian youths are invited to take a seat at the table only to find the real decisions have already been made elsewhere. If there is a growing body of research illustrating how and why youth could and should be included, then it is imperative to question the planning models as well theories of youth (as I have done in this chapter). The City of Toronto Planning Division will need to do a better job in speaking the language of youth and determine what platforms Torontonian youth utilize to engage them in planning discussions. There isn't one, all-

inclusive model of participation to engage with Torontonian youths; the Planning Division must develop a menu of strategies and malleable approaches to achieve effective and meaningful results.

CHAPTER 3 – YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY REPORT

That is one of the things that we are really learning to do here; is to say, no we must be heard. We are the future. So, in a nutshell, that's who I am. I am the future." - Ida, The Gambia (Gundan, 2014)

This chapter purports to do two things. First, to discuss critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a tool that will be used to analyze this study's focus documents on engaging youth. The focus will be given to the eight principles of CDA suggested by Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak (1997). These principles will allow for a solid understanding of the framework used by planners in their "engagement" with youth in their planning (or non-planning). Second, in using the CDA lenses to look at "youth engagement" this chapter will address the following three fundamental questions from Shier's Pathways of Participation: *Are we ready to take young people's views into account? Are we ready to include young people in the decision-making process? And are we ready to share some of the adult power with young people?*

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS (CDA)

The origins of CDA lie in Classical Rhetoric, Text Linguistics, Socio-linguistics, as well as in Applied Linguistics and Pragmatics (Weiss & Wodak, 2002). Fairclough (1989) explains CDA as an interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse, which views "language as a form of social practice" (p. 20) and concentrates on the social and political authority as its reproduced by text and talk. In other words, language is both socially built-in as well as "socially shaped" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258).

Critical linguistics has been a method to the study of discourse for the last thirty years. It is deeply rooted in the notion that the linguistic choices of a text composer is a means of achieving a specific ideological objective. Fairclough and Wodak (1997) effectively translate this into the "working assumption" that "any part of any language text, spoken or written, is simultaneously constituting representations, relations, and identities" (p. 275). To put it another way, discourse plays the part of a select world view, select social relations between people, and select social identities as per the purpose, context and addressees of the text. CDA seeks to unpack the hidden

ideologies of discourse that have become normalized with time and are assumed credible and typical features of discourse.

Methodologically, CDA users think through the broader discourse context and bear in mind the political along with the economic juxtaposition of language usage and production. CDA is influenced by the work of prominent social theorists like Gramsci, Marx, Habermas, Foucault, Bourdieu, and Althusser, and calls for the investigation of ideologies and power relations associated with discourse. Another instrumental and valuable source for CDA is the Marxist-inspired Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, specifically Adorno and Horkheimer, along with Habermas (Fowler, et al., 1979; Fairclough N. , 1989; Wodak, 2001). Quoting Habermas (1967, p. 259, cited in Martin & Wodak, 2003), Wodak (2001), emphasizes that "most critical discourse experts would support Haberman's claim that "language is also a medium of domination and social force. It serves to legitimize relations of organized power. In so far as the legitimizations of power relations…are not articulated…language is also ideological. (p. 2)". Fairclough (1989) adds "that language connects with the social through being the primary domain of ideology, and through being both a site of, and a stake in, struggles for power (p. 15)."

CDA is built on the concept that there is inequitable access to linguistic and social resources, as resources that are controlled institutionally. The framework of access to discourse and communicative matters is a crucial component for CDA. This concept is important to embrace because it will help to analyze the language employed throughout the 2015 City of Toronto *Youth Engagement Strategy* report. According to Fairclough (1989), language contributes to the domination of some people by others, and that a more critical analysis of the ideological workings of language is "the first step towards emancipation (p. 1)." This assertion is the concern of the following section.

Two additional CDA concepts critical to the analysis of the *Youth Engagement Strategy* report are 'power behind discourse' and 'power in discourse' (Fairclough, 1989). Fairclough's concept of 'power behind discourse' examines the underlying forces of power between speakers and how their current situation influences their power inequity. For example, when investigating the 'power behind discourse' in the *Youth Engagement Strategy*, the City Planning Division, Consultant Team and Youth Research Team (henceforth YRT) had the power to decide the topic of conversations, questions, where to organize and/or host meetings, and decide on the methods used to work with the youths. Conversely, 'power in discourse' probes the language itself, and

how power relationships are flaunted through language. For example, depending on who is leading the *Youth Engagement Strategy*, an interaction applying formal modes of conduct (such as 'sir') can indicate power inequality in the language itself. These latter two exemplifies Bachrach and Baratz claim that power over others can be utilized in ways that impact "the mobilization of bias" between a social or political system theoretically that excludes some people or groups from progressing their own self-identified interests (Bachrach & Baratz, 1970).

According to Steven Lukes, power can be exercised over others by stonewalling them from identifying or understanding their own interests (Lukes, 1974). In other words, power can be employed over others by promoting what Marx and Engels (1967) referred to as false consciousness, or by utilizing what Gramsci, Hoare and Smith (1971) described as cultural hegemony. As Lukes (1974) explains "Person *A* may exercise *power* over Person *B* by getting him/her to do what he/she does not want to do, but he/she also exercises power over him/her by influencing, shaping, or determining his/her very wants" (p. 23). Lukes (1974), Bachrach and Baratz (1970) individually shaped different functioning explanations of the term power, which were encompassed within the limits of the *power as domination* worldview. Adeney-Riskotta defines the dominant paradigm of explaining power as a "top-down" phenomenon: power flows from the powerful people at the top, down to the weak masses below; and, it belongs to the elite, who are more or less able to force their will on the rest of society (Adeney-Riskotta, 2005).

> Teun van Dijk (1995) in his article, *Aims of Critical Discourse Analysis* concludes that,
>
> "CDA is a special approach in discourse analysis which focuses on the discursive conditions, components and consequences of power abuse by dominant (elite) groups and institutions. CDA examines patterns of access and control over contexts, genres, text and talk, their properties, as well as the discursive strategies of mind control. It studies discourse and its functions in society and the ways society, and especially forms of inequality, are expressed, represented, legitimated or reproduced in text and talk (p. 24)."

Thus, in exploring the 2015 City of Toronto's *Youth Engagement Strategy* report in the next section, CDA will be used to deconstruct as well as critically analyze the text to uncover hidden ideologies. The analysis will not only address the questions posed at the beginning of this chapter but will also reveal whether or not the City of Toronto Planning Division, Consultant Team and YRT prioritized their own interests over the youths. Additionally, the analysis will show whether

or not Torontonian youths participated in meaningful tasks and assess whether the engagement process was for educational purposes rather than a resource for the city.

ANALYSIS

City of Toronto Chief Planner & Executive director, Jennifer Keesmaat, launched the *Youth Engagement Strategy* as part of *Growing Conversations*[2] in 2015. The objective of this strategy was to learn about the issues that matter to youth, identify barriers to youth engagement, and what recommendations the youth could provide to improve youth engagement. In launching this strategy, Keesmaat stated "we must do things differently to engage with the youths of Toronto" (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 34). So, Keesmaat and the City Planning Division appointed a consultant team composed of Swerhun Facilitation, Maximum City, and Urban Strategies Inc. to lead a 6-month study process. Central to the success of the study was the YRT, a diverse group of ten city builders aged 18-29, hired by the Consultant Team to research youth engagement issues with a broader youth audience across Toronto with the goal of providing insights and ideas on how best to reach Toronto's youth (City of Toronto, 2015).

The 6-month study process included three workshops that brought City Planning, the Consultant Team, and the YRT together to discuss the research outcomes and strategies to improve youth engagement in city planning. During their consultations, the YRT used a variety of methods, including surveys, pop-up town halls, and facilitated workshops. Their work resulted in over 150 pages of documentation which will be analyzed in this section utilizing the eight principles of theory and method suggested by Fairclough and Wodak (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 279). These are:

1. **Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory**. Critical analysis implies a systematic methodology and relationship between the text and its social conditions, ideologies and power-relations. Interpretations are always dynamic and open to new contexts and new information (Keller, 2015, p. 18).

[2] *Growing Conversation* vision is to make Toronto the most engaged city in North America. This is done by working with residents to identify a series of Opportunities for Change. These opportunities and constraints will form the foundation of all conversations, as well as the final Engagement Action Plan, will be built upon. The Opportunities for Change will inform the development of a series of Pillars of Effective Engagement which will guide City Planning Division whenever they undertake future engagement initiatives (City of Toronto, 2020).

2. **Discourse is historical**. Discourses are historical and can only be understood in relation to their context. Discourse is not only embedded in a particular culture, ideology or history, but also connected intertextually to other discourses (Keller, 2015, p. 17).
3. **Discourse does ideological work**. Language use may be ideological, which can be determined by analyzing texts to investigate their interpretation, reception and social effects (Keller, 2015).
4. **Critical discourse analysis addresses social problems.** CDA is concerned with social problems. It is not concerned with language or language use per se, but rather the linguistic character of social and cultural processes and structures (Keller, 2015, p. 17).
5. **Power relations are discursive.** Power-relations have to do with discourse, and CDA studies both power in discourse and power over discourse (Keller, 2015, p. 17).
6. **Discourse constitutes society and culture**. Society and culture are dialectically related to discourse: society and culture are shaped by discourse, and simultaneously constitute discourse. Every single instance of language use reproduces or transforms society and culture, including power relations (Keller, 2015).
7. **The link between text and society is mediated**. The connection between text and society is indirect and manifests through some (socio-cognitive) intermediary such as the one advanced in the sociopsychological model of text comprehension (Wodak R. , 1986 cited in Keller, 2015, p.17)
8. **Discourse is a form of social action**. CDA is understood as a social scientific discipline which makes its interests explicit and prefers to apply its discoveries to practical questions (Titscher, et al., 2000, p. 146 after Wodak 1996: 17–20 cited in in Keller, 2015, p.18)

Utilizing Fairclough and Wodak's eight principles enables the focus on signifiers that make up the text, the specific linguistic selections, their juxtapositioning, sequencing, and layout. Fairclough and Wodak's theory and method will provide for multiple points of analytic entry. Through these points of analysis, I will illuminate the patterns, power relation, discourse and disjunctions that need to be described, interpreted, and explained in the 2015 City of Toronto *Youth Engagement Strategy* report.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Torontonian youths are diverse and a growing demographic. They live, work and play in various neighbourhoods throughout the city. In launching the *Growing Conversations* in January 2014, the City Planning Division's goal was to make Toronto the most engaged city in North America on planning issues (City of Toronto, 2015). The Planning Division envisions a future where a whole new generation of Torontonian youth are mobilized to engage in city building (City of Toronto, 2015). The five main objectives of the *Growing Conversations* are (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 6):

1. Better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the current community planning process in Toronto
2. Explore new engagement models and tools
3. Explore opportunities and best practices related to implementing Community Planning Advisory Groups in each Ward
4. Explore opportunities to broaden participation by engaging new audiences
5. Identify other potential opportunities to improve engagement in the current community planning process

As part of objective four, "the Division identified a series of new audiences that it would like to engage more effectively in the planning process, including youth aged 18–30. The *Youth Engagement Strategy* aims to address this important objective" (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 6).

As mentioned, the strategy was led by a consultant team composed of Swerhun Facilitation, Maximum City, and Urban Strategies Inc. in close collaboration with the City of Toronto Planning Division (see **Table 1.1**). Central to the study was the YRT, a talented, diverse group of ten passionate city builders hired by the Consultant Team to research youth engagement issues. The YRT played a vital role in the study process. The YRT performed their research over a period of 5 weeks in October and November of 2014 (City of Toronto, 2015). The YRT engaged with "431 people between the ages of 14-37, with most falling into the original target demographic of 18-30-year-olds" (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 189).

The participants of the *Youth Engagement Strategy* were a diverse group of individuals from across the city. Amongst the 102 youth whose ages were recorded, "20-year olds were most represented. The second most represented group was 23-year olds. Five participants were between 16-19 years old, 67 were between 20-24 years old, and 30 participants were between 25-29 years

old" (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 189). From a total of 124 youth participants whose gender was recorded, "72 identified as male and 52 identified as female. Two researchers also recorded the ethnic background of their participants, and among the 99 individuals who reported their ethnicity, 89 identified as visible minorities" (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 189).

Table 1.1 – Youth Engagement Strategy Report

STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED		ROLES / RESPONSIBILITIES
City of Toronto Planning Division	Jennifer Keesmaat Daniel Fusca Jeff Cantos	The Planning Division retained a Consulting Team to report on how the City Planning Division can better involve youth in city building conversations and mobilize them into becoming active on planning and city building issues.
Consulting Firms	**Swerhun Facilitation** Ian Malczewski Victoria Ho **Maximum City** Josh Fullan **Urban Strategies Inc.** Pino DiMascio Mirej Vasic	The Consulting Team hired ten youth researchers which formed the Youth Research Team (YRT) to help develop the report for the City Planning Division by researching youth engagement issues with their peers. YRT shared their summary report with the Consulting Teams.
Youth Research Team (YRT)	Suhal Ahmed Zakariya Ahmed Evelyn Amponsah Jo Flatt Corey Horowitz Hiba Hussain Mojan Jianfar Anna Procopio Siva Vijenthira Jacob Zorzella	• Engaged and sought feedback from other youth about youth engagement in city planning; • Strived to achieve participation of youth with a diversity of perspectives, experiences and interests. • Organized and held meetings engaging 30 to 50 youth participants; • Encouraged participants to be constructive and solution-oriented by providing advice on how to address challenges;

STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED		ROLES / RESPONSIBILITIES
		• Documented and summarized the results of conversations by noting areas of common ground between perspectives and areas where opinions differed; and • Shared their findings with the City and the Consultant Team.

As shown on **Table 1.1**, the YRT role was vital because they connected with other youth to understand what issues matter most to them, when and how to involve youth in city building conversations and how to expand youth understanding and engagement in city building (City of Toronto, 2015). The study process took place over six months, and included three workshops that brought City Planning, the Consultant Team, and the YRT together to discuss the emerging research outcomes and strategies to improve youth engagement in city planning (City of Toronto, 2015). The YRT report and the entire 2015 *Youth Engagement Strategy* is included as an **Appendix A** of this document.

Collectively, the analysis of the 2015 City of Toronto *Youth Engagement Strategy* will show two things. First, since youth input was sought in the engagement, it is important to look at whether or not decision making occurred collaboratively; that is, between the Planning Division, Consulting Team, and the YRT. Second, it will examine how the engagement with the youth aligned with how it was advertised and whether the aim to empower the youth participants was achieved.

CDA IS INTERPRETATIVE AND EXPLANATORY

CDA is used for exposing how discourse is formed by ideology and power (Paltridge, 2000). Moreover, discourse can be understood in different ways (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). In the report, the City of Toronto Planning Division promotes the idea that the participatory process is the main issue, along with the youth. Public engagement is defined in the report as a major tool for planners to ensure the city's diverse views and priorities are reflected in their work. Moreover, it is through public engagement people can have a real and significant influence on both planning and Toronto's future (City of Toronto, 2015). Thus, to address the gap between the participatory

process and youth, the Planning Division launched a *Youth Engagement Strategy* (City of Toronto, 2015).

The idea that there is a gap within youth participation in the City's planning division creates the perspective of US (the youth) and THEM (Planning Division, the Consulting Team, YRT), which is a position that begins by demarcations along lines of power. Accordingly, power is evident when, for instance, THEM utilize *discussion guides* to provide feedback and advice to the Planning Division. If their power and decision making were distributed equally amongst all parties, youth (US) would, have been invited to express their own views freely (in their modem of choice), based on their developing capacity. Such an approach would have resulted in building youth capacity for conflict resolution, communication, and decision-making.

Unequal positions of power are also evident in the YRT and Consulting Team in the *Interim Report* summary of key findings from the first stage of work in developing the City of Toronto's *Youth Engagement Strategy* (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 49). In the *Strategy*, there are three sections: "an overview of the YRT's work and research process, demographics, and a summary of the findings from Youth Workshop #1, the YRT's research, and a supplemental literature review and research" (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 49). These sections are compiled by the YRT for the Consulting Team which then reports to the City of Toronto Planning Division on how they can achieve these goals.

> *"Many participants identified issues of social equity and equality as important, including: marginalization, injustice, systemic racism, the growing income gap, gender issues, the disconnect between wealth of development (condos) and inadequate/crumbling services and infrastructure, and poverty* (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 191)*"* – YRT Victoria Ho writes about topics youth care about.

> *"It feels like all the decisions were already made and they're just having this meeting because they have to have a meeting* (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 141)*."* – YRT Siva Vijenthira writes that many participants feel their input will not be heard, or that politicians/businesses/other players have more power in decision-making than members of the public.

"Participants overwhelmingly believed that their input would not be heard and did not matter in the decision-making process; they either did not trust the City to respect their perspective, or did not think that their non-expert perspective was worth submitting (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 140)*."* – YRT Siva Vijenthira notes on key messages from the youths.

DISCOURSE IS HISTORICAL

The Planning Division detailed the background and historical context of the *2015 Youth Engagement Strategy*, including the participatory process. The report makes clear early on that the study and the participatory process each had its own historical background.

The readers are informed of the problem with the participatory process itself. While the process allows for active participation by all members of a group in a decision-making process, the participatory process is seen as unequal and having major gaps.

So, if the readers do not know the historical background of the study, they likely will concentrate on the gaps of the participatory process done by the Planning Division, or focus on the inequality issue, without considering the broader perspectives, such as the chronological developments made from *Growing Conversations* to now.

The following quotes indicate the background and historical context of the Planning Divisions need to engage with Torontonian youths effectively in the planning process.

"In 2011, 541,745 individuals in the City of Toronto were between the ages of 15 and 29 and made up 21% of the city's population. This population grew by 7.4% from 2006 to 2011, more than the 4.5% population increase in the city as a whole. Specifically, those between the ages of 25-29 made up the largest proportion of the cohort (211,910; 39%), followed by individuals between the ages of 20-24 (181,460; 33%). Between all age groups, there tended to be an equal number of male and female youth. In terms of visible minority status of those between the ages of 16 and 29 years old, 54% of youth identified as a visible minority (277,355) while fewer residents in the city as a whole, 49.1%, identified as such (1,264,390). In 2011, the largest visible minority group among youth was of South Asian descent (13.1%). This was followed by people of Chinese descent (13.1%). In terms of education, 83.1% of Toronto's population had a certificate, diploma or degree, with the majority having obtained a high school certificate or degree (34.4%). This trend in

educational attainment was also recorded among YRT participants. In the research, 59% of youth had at least a high school diploma" (City of Toronto, 2015, pp. 189-190).

"Much of this population growth is driven by youth under the age of 30. They are young Torontonians who are moving out of their homes for the first time to attend a college or university, find their first job, or live with friends; young immigrants looking for a brighter future for themselves and their families; or people from across the country who have chosen Toronto as their home. Youth are the future of our city, and we want to ensure that it grows and changes in ways that reflect their values and unique needs (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 34)*."*

"City planning is incredibly important. It affects everything from how long your commute is to how clean the air is to where you go to play to how safe your neighbourhoods are. It's the City of Toronto Planning Division's job to develop and implement strategies that address these issues, and a big part of that job involves engaging the public. Public engagement is one of the main tools planners use to make sure the city's diverse perspectives and priorities are reflected in their work, and through public engagement people can have a real and meaningful influence on planning and on Toronto's future (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 45)*."*

DISCOURSE DOES IDEOLOGICAL WORK

Ideology is the primary beliefs of a group and its representative (van Dijk, Ideology and Discourse: A Multidisciplinary Introduction, 2004). It may limit or govern not only what we speak or what we write about, but also how we do so (van Dijk, Ideology and Discourse: A Multidisciplinary Introduction, 2004). Ideology in a discourse illustrates the subtle paradigms used in framing language by "emphasize a positive thing about US" and "emphasize a negative thing about THEM (van Dijk, 2004, p. 44)". From the discourse built in the *Youth Engagement Strategy*, US can be defined as youth, and THEM can be regarded as the YRT, the Consulting Team, and the City of Toronto Planning Division.

The youth are seen as a challenge. This is attributable to youths having a lower position in society than adults which restricts the possibilities youth have to participate in decision-making.

According to the *Youth Engagement Strategy* (2015), the top barriers to engage youth in the planning process are "trust, transparency, intimidation, youth representation, promotion and communication, relevance of planning, branding of engagement activities, how to engage, scheduling and time conflicts, far or hard-to-access locations for meetings and youth indicated that they struggled to understand the relevance of city planning relative to other priorities, like school, work and socializing (p. 13)."

With respect to the YRT, the Consulting Team, and the Planning Division, the *Youth Engagement Strategy* depicts THEM as an authoritative party and shown as positive, due to THEM recognizing the value of young people in decision-making. YRT documented that coordinating pop-up town hall meetings and facilitating workshops were "challenging" (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 147)." The only way to address these challenges was to piggyback on other meetups and phone interviews (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 147). This poses a serious concern for the study, since youth from different neighborhoods who originally showed interest in this study, would no longer participate due to schedule conflicts. Furthermore, it was noted in several YRT submissions that certain youths were not given a chance to speak due to other youths dominating the conversation (see pp. 62, 84, 110, 116, 139, 147, 175). Rather than finding alternative strategies for engagement, the YRT naïvely progressed with the study. Nevertheless, the engagement activities conducted by YRT and submitted was detailed which helped both the Consulting Team and City of Toronto Planning Division assemble the *Youth Engagement Strategy*.

In the text, ideology operates by emphasizing positive details about the City of Toronto (2015) as it can be seen from the following sentences, "every year, City Planning engages as many as 20,000 residents through public meetings alone, and many thousands more engaged online (p. 7)," "the Strategy's policy framework begins with a vision to mobilize a new generation to engage in city building (p. 10)," and "Youth Engagement is central to City Planning's goal of making Toronto the most engaged city in North America (p. 14). In contrast, the youth are depicted negatively. The text indicates that the education system fails to encourage youth to participate in activities that develop decision-making skills. In the report, YRT notes that "certain communities lack youth opportunities (p. 101)," and youth state that, "there should be more alternative educational institutions for young people to go to in order to learn life skills, professional development, and other skills not taught in schools (p. 54)," and "start education and engagement

about municipal issues early (p. 68)." Consequently, the youth do not acquire the essential analytical abilities for critical thinking or problem solving.

Throughout the engagement activities conducted by YRT, we see that although, youth were given a chance to participate in decision-making, YRT staff note how some of the youth have not received adequate training or ever have had access to the appropriate information that would enable them to make informed decisions (see pp. 80,87,93,102,108). Thus, THEM, the Planning Division, proposed *"Planners in Classrooms,"* an educational outreach program to increase awareness of planning issues and concepts among youth (p. 16).

While there are two divisions (THEM & US) in the *Youth Engagement Strategy*, the primary ideology is the unequal representation issue as revealed by the Chief Planner and Executive Director Jennifer Keesmaat in her statement, *"youth are the future of our city, and we want to ensure that it grows and changes in ways that reflect their values and unique needs* (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 34)*"*. This statement points out that the City of Toronto Planning Division is concerned much with the inequality issue.

> *"Inconvenient meeting times and locations were identified as concerns for a number of participants. Public meetings and consultations that aim at including young people need to be accessible. One of the ways this can be achieved is by going to the youth rather than having the youth come to you* (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 59)*."* – YRT Anna Procopio notes youth barriers from taking action on the issues.

> *"A lot of youth post about issues on Facebook and twitter…The City should look to take advantage of this to utilize power of social networks* (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 68)*"* – YRT Corey Horowitz writes about the Planning Division could better involve the youth.

> *"It often feels like no matter what the action is, there is no result. The system that is in place and the people that are running it are too powerful. They will eventually make small concessions after a certain amount of public outcry, but I have never seen significant change happen* (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 74)*"* – YRT Corey Horowitz notes the barriers preventing youth from taking action on the issues they care about.

CDA ADDRESSES SOCIAL PROBLEMS

All through the *Youth Engagement Strategy*, there are clear indications of social problems between the City of Toronto Planning Division and the youth. Arnold Rose defines a social problem as, "…a situation which has influenced a good majority of people, i.e., they believe that this situation itself is responsible for their difficulties or displeasures which may be reformed" (Rahman, 2020). The two noticeable signs of social problems mentioned in the *Youth Engagement Strategy* is the absence of youth in Toronto's planning process, as well as the issues and barriers youth face through engagement. The former is due to adults dominating the conversation (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 5), while the latter is due to lack of trust in the government, a lack of awareness of engagement activities, lack of youth representation in positions of influence, and intimidation (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 13). Moreover, the series of surveys, pop-up town halls, and facilitated workshops conducted by the Consultant Team and YRT indicate how the programs and initiatives do not typically cater to the youth, but meant simply to collect data to gather insights and ideas from youth.

As previously stated, instead of the youths voicing their issues and concerns directly to the City Planning Division, which would have indicated direct access to those yielding power, they were made to engage with the YRT. The quantitative results from the workshops and meetings which is consolidated and summarized by the YRT and the Consulting Teams for the City indicates a generation gap between the Torontonian youths and adults. Multiple youths in the survey mentioned that "there is a gap between the older generation and themselves in terms of acceptance of equality and acting upon the lack of it in the city" (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 171). Additionally, other youth identified "issues of social equity and equality, including: marginalization, injustice, systemic racism, the growing income gap, gender issues, the disconnect between wealth of development, inadequate/crumbling services and infrastructure, and poverty (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 191)" as issues they care about. These unfortunate gaps have led to many challenges, such as mutual lack of understanding and trust, lack of collaboration, misjudgments and discriminations of each other's culture, interests, language, and traditions. The representation of these youth social identities indicates that the discourse is influenced by power and ideology (Fairclough, 1992).

The following quotes indicate youth awareness of their (re)presentation as a social problem and their desire to be part of the design and process of change.

"I don't want to feel like a bystander. I have a sense of feeling responsible without being ignorant. You complain, but then you don't act – there comes a breaking point when you decide you need to actually do something (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 120)*."* – A participant expressing that they participate because of anger, guilt, accountability and a sense of responsibility to act

"I participate out of anger because I do not want to complain without taking action (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 120)*."* – participant concerned about the future

"duty to have my voice heard (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 120)*."* – participant as part of a racialized and under-represented community**.**

POWER RELATIONS ARE DISCURSIVE

Power refers to "a property of relations between social groups, institutions or organizations … understood as a form of social power abuse, that is, as a legally or morally illegitimate exercise of control over others in one's own interest, often resulting in social inequality" (van Dijk, 1996, p. 84). In the *Youth Engagement Strategy,* power is exercised in covert and overt ways. Overtly, power is evidenced by expressed statements from the Planning Division striving to understand how they can better involve youth in city planning conversations and mobilize them into becoming active participants. This is achieved through formal structures, authorities, and procedures they have created (City of Toronto, 2015).

Covertly, power is evident when the City of Toronto Planning Division exercises their authority through the strategy and implementation framework (pp. 14-25). The City of Toronto Planning Division, the Consulting Team alongside YRT maintain authority by not only controlling who gets to sit at the decision-making table but also what is on the agenda. In the *Youth Engagement Strategy* report, the surveys, pop-up town halls, and facilitated workshops are evidence of non-existing relations between the Planning Division (THEM) and youth (US) as well as evidence of the existing divide. The language used in the *Strategy* (2015) by the chief planner Jennifer Keesmaat, "this is an exciting opportunity", "we want", "we've launched", "we know" (p. 34), further demonstrates the disconnect.

YRT representative Suhail Ahmed writes “in city building conversations with youth, there should be a focus on how the project will affect the youth in the short term as many youth may not expect to be in the area or city the long term” (p. 151). Another Torontonian youth comments, “allow participants to be involved in the issue beyond just talking in meetings. There needs to be a way to constantly give feedback on a project (p. 151).”

> *Mohsin, an industrial engineer argued “often these projects happen over many years in which the student expects to be in a completely different stage of life. If you only talk about long term results, then only the older people with more stable lives will show* (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 151)*.”* – YRT Suhail Ahmed asks youths how the Planning Division could better involve youth.

> *“Incorporate city building into the school curriculum, build an interest from a young age* (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 151)*.”* – YRT Suhail Ahmed asks youths how the Planning Division could better involve youth.

> *“Have opportunities to network or make connections with important people and other attendees* (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 151)*.”* – YRT Suhail Ahmed asks youths how the Planning Division could better involve youth.

DISCOURSE CONSTITUTES SOCIETY AND CULTURE

To see how society and culture constitute discourse in the *Youth Engagement Strategy*, the three broad domains of social life of *representation*, *relations*, and *identities* (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997) will be analyzed. Representation refers to the language used in a text or talk to assign meaning to groups and their social practices and to social and ecological conditions and objects (Fairclough, 1989; van Dijk, 2002). The *Youth Engagement Strategy* presents a need for the City of Toronto to be characterized as the most engaged city in North America as represented by the Consultant Team and YRT (supported by the City of Toronto Planning Division) and youth.

The *Youth Engagement Strategy* shows us how the dominating party treats the dominated party from the moment the *Call for Applicants: Youth Research Team* was advertised (p. 31) along

with the *Terms of Reference* (pp. 33-38); to the culmination of the *Research Materials & Reports* (pp. 44-113) completed by the YRT and submitted to the Consulting Team.

> *"Your cover letter should tell us about you (YRT), your interest in engagement, and why you think involving youth in city building matters. YRT members will be given a stipend of $1,500.* (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 31)*."* – Call for Applicants for YRT.

> *"The Terms of Reference outlines the approach that will guide the Youth Research Team's work. It is meant to guide members of the team by explaining the context of their work, outlining proposed research questions, and providing templates to track their work. Key components of this document include: Chief Planners' Statement (page 2); Proposed Questions to Guide the Youth Research Team (page 3); Role of the Youth Research Team (page 3); Key Steps for the Youth Research Team (page 4); Conceptual Research Work Plan (page 6); and Reporting Templates (pages 7and on).* (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 33)*"* – Terms of Reference for YRT.

The controlling group was noticeable throughout the study. Although the youth participating were decently represented, they were not portrayed as essential clientele for participation despite YRT purported aim to better understand youth issues and involve youth in city building conversations.

Similarly, with relation and identity, the detailed identities of the involved actors convince the readers that those involved are not usual actors.

> *"We advertised all of the events via the York & Ryerson Planning Departments, University of Toronto's School of Public Policy and Governance, planning based listservs, the Centre for Social Innovation listserv, The Civil Salon email list, our personal Facebook and Twitter accounts, and blogTO. Based on our modes of advertisement and communication, we primarily reached out to educated early-career professionals with undergraduate or masters degrees who are reasonably aware or engaged with issues that are happening in the city.* (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 116)*"* – Overview of The City of Toronto's Planning Division's Growing Conversation Initiative.

The engagement seems more concerned with supporting the objectives of the capital owner, which in this case is the City of Toronto Planning Division, rather than understanding the needs of the youth and garnering their involvement. The objective being information gathering, as explicitly stated in the overview, "in order to collect the data, we used four different methods to gather insights and ideas from youth (p. 116)." The objective should have been to involve the youth as researchers and not only as a study object. The YRT should have designed the research questions instead of Chief Planner Jennifer Keesmaat proposing the questions.

Success depends on effective representation. All persons in this study should be held responsible both to themselves and their partners or representative networks; they cannot act for an individual need but for the collective good. Thus, it is crucial that all parties acknowledge the need for beneficial collaboration and consultation and to value all views. Lastly, cultural considerations, as well as traditions, have to be accommodated when seeking to form an environment encouraging the participation of youth.

> *"Marginalized communities repeatedly get the short end of the stick. Trying to end the injustices perpetrated against these communities in the hope of greater equity and inclusion is a top priority* (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 53)*"* – YRT Anna Procopio notes youth interest in fighting injustice.

> *"Capitalism. Poor people are getting poorer, while the rich are getting richer. Toronto is multicultural but only certain voices are being heard; there are clear cycles of poverty and cycles of privilege that reproduce the worst inequities of our economy* (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 53)*."* – YRT Anna Procopio notes youth interest in the economy.

> *"More needs to be done to make Toronto a welcoming and inclusive place for immigrants, migrant workers, and refugees* (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 53)*"* – YRT Anna Procopio notes youth interest in ensuring the city is hospitable to newcomers**.**

LINK BETWEEN TEXT AND SOCIETY IS MEDIATED

In order to describe the relationship between the text of the *Youth Engagement Strategy and the media,* Fairclough's ideology of media is based on how language and power can be used.

Fairclough (1995) states that "in media, ideologies are under the control of certain institutions that hold political, cultural, and economic power (p. 40)." Fairclough (2006a) argues that media discourse should be viewed as having complex and contradictory ideological constructions that are not always fixed, but vary in their constructions (p. 1). For this reason, it becomes crucial to examine the ideologically invested meanings pertaining to media, which are advertisements.

From the report, a case can be made based on language and power (Fairclough, 1989; Wodak, 2001) because "it is usually in language that discriminatory practices are enacted, in language that unequal relations of power are constituted and reproduced, and in language that social asymmetries may be challenged and transformed (Blackledge, 2005, p. 5). Michael Foucault extends this discussion of the concept of power in terms of two principles: the first is the decentralization of power position and the other is disciplinary power and knowledge (Foucault, 1979). His method however, excluded the presence of a well-organized and controlling rational agency. According to Foucault, the debate of power should incorporate more well-known intellectual preoccupation in all fields (Goodseed, 2015). Therefore, he examined the concept of power in new fields, such medicine, psychiatry, penology, and human sexuality. His work is widely extended and applied to the criticism of literature, art and film, semiotics, feminist analysis, social history, and theories of planning (Goodseed, 2015).

In the *Youth Engagement Strategy*, the youth are seen as the dominated, and the dominating party happens to be the Planning Division. The advertisement for a *Call for Applicants* for YRT played a significant role in selecting the youths by the Consulting Team and the Planning Division. Studying the media ideology of Fairclough and Foucault, control lies in the position of the institutions that held the power. The position of the Planning Division can be traced to the *Terms of Reference* "the *Youth Engagement Strategy* seeks to understand how the City of Toronto Planning Division can better involve youth in city building conversations and mobilize them into becoming active on planning issues (p. 33)." The questions arranged by the Planning Division to guide the YRT further demonstrates the power portrayed in the advertisement (p. 35). Lastly, power and dominance can be seen through the visual media texts presenting not only the conceptual research work plan but also the deadlines and deliverables decided by the City of Toronto Planning Division (pp. 35, 39).

Overall, power is exercised by human agents and is also created by them, influences them, and limits them (Giddens, 1982). To put it another way, power is not a quality or a resource of

people, or a ranking in the social structure, but a social factor which impacts both these elements of human society and is created by THEM (City of Toronto Planning Division). The youth must be encouraged to voice their opinions and beliefs, freely and genuinely, so they can contribute to shaping their environment, their communities, and the world they will inherit.

> *"Many youth feel passionate about the environment, since they see themselves as the eventual inheritors of the consequences of good or bad environmental decisions* (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 12)*."* – Issue that matter most to youth.

> *"Contributing to some sort of major societal transformation away from individualism and towards a greater, more caring collective. Focusing on overcoming and creating a society that isn't centered on individualism, conservatism, and injustice. The welfare state has been decimated; homelessness is on the rise; shelters are being closed; the physical environment is inaccessible to many people; therefore, ensuring that everyone, in one way or another, is able to live a stable and fulfilling life is a source of motivation* (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 52)*."* – YRT Anna Procopio asking youths what their interests are in life and what inspires them to get out of bed every day.

> *"Many research participants were unaware of how many public meetings and consultations happen all the time in the City of Toronto. Efforts should be made to creatively advertise the community engagement process through social media, as well as with eye-catching signage in highly trafficked public space such as on the TTC. Youth animators could also be hired by the City to get the word out.* (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 51)*."* – YRT Anna Procopio quoting youths on the topic of creative outreach.

DISCOURSE IS A FORM OF SOCIAL ACTION

CDA, by exposing ambiguities and power relationships, is a form of social action that tries to mediate and create change in communicative and socio-political practices (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Paltridge, 2000). The power relationship in the *Youth Engagement Strategy* is revealed when the social identities (the youth, YRT, Planning Division) are uncovered. The Planning Division portrays its power when it offers a fixed stipend fee ($1,500) to the facilitator

(YRT) for completing all responsibilities in the *Terms of Reference*. We again see the influence of the Planning Division through its deadlines and deliverables. Lastly, control was shown by the Planning Division requiring a specific template for the report and putting forth open-ended questions for the youth by the YRT. The YRT team were hired to research youth engagement issues but never were given the ability to engage with the youth organically to have them formulate the questions.

In addition, notable in the *Youth Engagement Strategy* are the four Focus Areas which reflect the priorities identified by the YRT through their research and workshops with the City and Consulting Team (City of Toronto, 2015). Though they form a social action by recommending specific actions, the Focus Areas did not speak to how the Planning Division would share the adult power with young people. The Focus Areas and Actions (p. 15) and Implementation Framework (p. 25) addressed how the City of Toronto Planning Division is prepared to take young people's views into account and allow young people to be part of the decision-making process, however, did not at all acknowledge the many comments made by the youth on wanting to share the power.

While young people may be demanding and challenging to work with, the Planning Division needs to be aware of the long-term rewards when power and control is shared. A genuine partnership is one in which each person has the opportunity to make suggestions and decisions, and engagement by each is acknowledged and respected. An alliance with youth whereupon the Planning Division work comprehensively with youth on matters affecting them would foster and improve the relationship. Also, sharing with youth the authority to make a decision means that the Planning Division is not only valuing youths judgment, but recognizing that the youth as assets in city planning. In order for the Planning Division to bring more youth voices into city planning, they need to embrace change.

> *"We have no voice as much as they say we do* (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 74)*."* – power relations between students and stakeholders.

> *"I think my agency is often limited to spaces, contexts, and power. In class, I feel like I can take action on these issues however I also feel like a very small fish in a big pond of sharks. Barriers include not feeling a part of the system, not seeing many people like myself a part of the system or in positions of power, my own doubts and fears. It would help to have more*

events geared towards the public (besides town hall meetings) that are neighborhood-friendly and forums for youth. Using social media is a huge avenue for innovative meeting formats or anything for that matter (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 79)*."* – Barriers preventing youth from taking action on issues they care about.

Develop civic skills by using hands-on teaching/learning before high school. This helps to cultivate a problem-solving culture at a critical time when young people (ages 10-18) are forming interests and social identities. Early engagement helps make it commonplace for young people to identify and be respected as relevant, intelligent, and active citizens. Hierarchical power dynamics can make some demographics feel inferior or that they have irrelevant knowledge. Replacing these dynamics with those that ensure participants feel valued is a key step to motivating people to contribute to a participatory process (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 177). – YRT Victoria Ho on what are the components of successful education and engagement programs that lead youth to take action and influence change.

To conclude, young Torontonians must be enabled to act as agents of positive social change to contribute to the city planning. The field of planning is increasingly recognizing youth as an important stakeholder group, and there are calls to directly involve youth in the planning process (Frank, 2006). Because youth are in many respects different from adults, the practice of youth participation needs special consideration (Frank, 2006). What the analysis of City of Toronto's *Youth Engagement Strategy* report showed was that the youth are eager to participate in the plans and planning policies. The City of Toronto Planning Division needs to respond by facilitating broad participation and representation in city planning efforts, describing the decision-making process and identifying the decision-makers, and building youth skills so they are able to participate effectively. Boosting youth participation in the City of Toronto will shape a brighter future for all. If the Planning Division incorporates youth at all levels of decision-making, it will foster positive social change and create sustainable societies.

To answer Shier's Pathways of Participation questions: A*re we ready to take young people's views into account? Are we ready to include young people in the decision-making process? And are we ready to share some of the adult power with young people?* The City of Toronto Planning Division must change its engagement practices with Torontonian youths. The

Planning Division cannot do a *Youth Engagement Strategy* and continue business as usual. It must be willing to change. And if not, then the Planning Division should not engage with youth in planning discussions.

There are ethics of professional conduct and quality research. The Planning Division needs to understand that youth do not have the life experience that adults do and should not use that as an excuse for poor quality or low expectations. Within the Planning Division, there should be a participatory youth-led model that is utilized for more than evaluation purposes, but for city planning efforts. When planners stop and listen – really listen – to what youth have to say and contribute, it is extremely remarkable what value youth add to society, to their peers, to their adult counterparts.

CHAPTER 4 – YOUTH, TRANSPORTATION, AND THE FUTURE

"If you plan cities for cars and traffic, you get cars and traffic. If you plan for people and places, you get people and places" - (Kent, 2005)

The 2015 City of Toronto *Youth Engagement Strategies report* revealed transportation as the topmost interest for youth. As a priority issue for youth, it is essential to consider *what role do youth play in transportation planning?* And *how can youth participate in transportation plans and policies in the City of Toronto?*

In answering these questions, this chapter will first define transportation planning and discuss current approaches used by planners. It will then evaluate the current role of youth in transportation planning, and discuss how youth can, and should, become active participants in developing and implementing transportation policies. Lastly, will conclude with remarks and recommendations to better address youth participation in transportation planning.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

The transportation system is the lifeline of a city. The health of the system is reflected from the condition, type, and spread of its transportation network (Sarkar, Maitri, & Joshi, 2015). Boisjoly and Yengoh (2017) highlight that transportation systems play a crucial role in offering individuals a variety of approaches to access their desired destinations, which in return, substantially impacts their quality of life. Pendall, et al., (2012) note that a well-developed system can promote social equity allowing residents to travel easily and affordably from their homes to work, school, entertainment, and shops. While Victor and Ponnuswamy (2012) make known "when there are efficient transportation systems, it results in economic, social, and political advantages. The economic advantages include: expanded market for goods; stabilization of prices in different markets; and economy of scale of concentration of activities in certain localities and subsequent distribution. The social benefits comprise: opportunities for travel, intellectual pursuits and pleasure; access to medical facilities; and choice of location for home and work. The political effects result from promotion of national integration, uniform extension of government services to various communities, and strengthening of the security of the country" (p. 1).

Transportation planning is defined by Sarkar, Maitri and Joshi (2017) as consisting of applications of science and art, along with an understanding of its technical element to arrive at a well-reasoned decision to develop transportation infrastructure facilities for the community. The primary purpose of transportation planning is to estimate the present and future travel demand for an area to prepare a transportation plan that ensures safe and smooth movement of all types of traffic (Sarkar, Maitri, & Joshi, 2017). Klaassen (1978) in his article explains that the purpose of transportation planning in urban areas and regions can be divided into two phases. First, transportation planners make a reasonable forecast of the distribution of population and economic activities across the proposed area for one or more future years, an activity usually carried out by economists. Second, the results are used to design a transportation network that could cope in some optimum way (at minimum societal costs, e.g.) with the predicted traffic distributions. Klaassen adds, the second phase consists of four steps: calculating how many trips would be produced; distributing the trips from each origin among different destinations; calculating the modal split of each flow; and assigning the traffic to the various networks (Klaassen, 1978).

Transportation planning heavily relies on technology, exposing the authority of transportation engineers and planners. There has been an evolving conversation between technocratic transportation planners and planners at large demanding to integrate social approaches into the planning process. Studies on the social effects of transportation planning have shown that the social element is still greatly marginalized in the planning processes (Boschmann & Kwan, 2008; Lucas & Jones, 2012; Chardonnel, Paulhiac Scherrer, & Scherrer, 2012; Geurs, Boon, & Van Wee, 2008; Manaugh, Badami, & El-Geneidy, 2015). One reason for this is the governance of the traditional planning approach, which normally focuses on traffic flows (Banister, 2008; Handy, 2008; Proffitt, Bartholomew, Ewing, & Miller, 2017).

The traditional approach, as defined by Banister, aims at improving traffic fluidity and reducing travel times (Banister, 2008). To accomplish these goals, transportation planning has conventionally fixated on the technical and physical dimension of transportation (Dodson, Buchanan, Gleeson, & Sipe, 2006). At the same time, the reasoning behind travel flows has added to the marginalization of the social perspective of mobility (Koglin, 2013). Today, mobility indicators and congestion support strategies are still predominant in transportation planning (Handy, 2008; Proffitt, Bartholomew, Ewing, & Miller, 2017).

Given the failings of the traditional approach, there are demands for a change of paradigm in transportation planning (Banister, 2008; Bertolini, Le Clercq, & Straatemeier, 2008; Booth & Richardson, 2001; Hodgson & Turner, 2003). The traditional approach has been labelled as "a top-down, one-way process, expert driven and technocentric" process (Booth & Richardson, 2001). Consequently, findings have supported the need for local and participatory approaches in transportation planning (Banister, 2008; Bertolini, Le Clercq, & Straatemeier, 2008; Booth & Richardson, 2001; Hodgson & Turner, 2003). Moreover, findings have suggested that the inclusion of diverse stakeholders can add to raising awareness to the social perspective of mobility (Handy, 2008; Hodgson & Turner, 2003; Elvy, 2014) and, in turn, encourage alternative transport planning approaches (Banister, 2008; Hull, 2008). Even though participation in transportation planning is not new, little is acknowledged about its influence on a greater inclusion of social issues and, more largely, to a paradigm shift (Boisjoly & Yengoh, 2017). There is a need for a better understanding of whether and how local and participatory processes can support systemic change in transportation planning (Boisjoly & Yengoh, 2017). While there is ample research on participatory approaches on one hand, and also on transportation planning, few studies have linked the gap between these two fields of research (Boisjoly & Yengoh, 2017). Moreover, even fewer studies have involved the youth and their role in transportation planning.

Thus, efforts need to be taken to integrate transportation planning to not only social justice but also the participatory process. Transportation planning's alignment with social justice and citizen engagement principles will allow planners to recognize that accessibility is an essential aspect of urban life. For many residents of inner suburbs, public transportation provides the necessary mobility to access job opportunities. Therefore, access to public transportation can be considered a social privilege of urban citizenship. The right to use a public service like transit is an entitlement that urban residents must "cry out of necessity and a demand for something more" (Marcuse, 2010, p. 190). Henri Lefebvre (1991) explains the right to the city as "the right to information, the right to use of multiple services, the right of users to make known their ideas on the space and time of their activities in urban areas; it would also cover the right to the use of the center" (p. 34).

In contemporary society there is a general understanding that the need for food, shelter and education are basic rights of an urban citizen, and there are many forms of help to support such

needs. Society is much less clear, however, “in determining whether needs for mobility and accessibility are basic needs” (Deka, 2004, p. 336).

YOUTH IN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

> *“Participants overwhelmingly believed that their input would not be heard and did not matter in the decision-making process; they either did not trust the City to respect their perspective, or did not think that their non-expert perspective was worth submitting”*
> (City of Toronto, 2015, p. 140)

In Toronto, neighborhoods are at the heart of the city’s livability. With 140 officially recognized neighbourhoods, and 239 unofficial neighbourhoods, the city has a mix of high-rise and suburban sprawl within its official and unofficial borders. Each is unique, with a culture and character of its own (Stephan & Chartier, 1998). There are more than 80 ethnic groups represented, speaking approximately 100 languages, which explains why the United Nations designated Toronto as the world's "most ethnically-diverse city” (Stephan & Chartier, 1998). Yet, this “diversity” is not reflected in its transportation systems. Roger Keil and Douglas Young (2005) have written a comprehensive study of Toronto’s “highly uneven and potentially unjust” transportation infrastructure, labelling its transportation as an “underfinanced, increasingly decentralized” system (p. 4). Keil and Young (2005) claim that there are contradictions within the infrastructure policies, and governance responsible for planning and providing for it (p. 4). The impacts and benefits of transport systems are often unevenly distributed across regions and population groups (Dodson, Buchanan, Gleeson, & Sipe, 2006). Specifically, low-income individuals are more probable to experience higher levels of exposure to car-related nuisances (Carrier, Apparicio, Séguina, & Crouse, 2014; Kingham, Pearce, & Peyman, 2007) and face greater barriers to accessibility as a result of the financial and location constraints they experience (Dodson, Buchanan, Gleeson, & Sipe, 2006).

Planners and politicians are among many actors that are central to the planning process of a neighborhood but are often outsiders; while local residents are key actors in the planning process yet do not take a central role (Lenihan, 2012). There is often a dissonance between the planning work and the representation of local interests, despite the representative nature of democratically

elected representatives of constituencies (Haie, 2014). Unlike politicians, planners do not have the same representative responsibility towards local residents. They often carry out their work, disconnected from the people who live in a given locality. Hence, Haie says, planners do not necessarily understand the social reality of the neighbourhoods or areas that constitute that locality, and frequently impose their own conceptions to the development of the area. This is a cause for concern; as long as planners – however proficient they may be – operate at a comfortable distance from the residents of a given area, they disregard the knowledge of the local population on how to build systems and structures that most effectively benefit residents (Haie, 2014).

In the published *Youth Engagement Strategy* report produced by City of Toronto Planning Division, transit and transportation was at the top of the list of concerns for Torontonian. The youth identified issues such as, cost of transit, the need for better and more frequent service, the need for diversity of transportation options, and cycling infrastructure as well as walkability as priorities (City of Toronto, 2015). The barriers preventing youth from becoming engaged in transportation planning discussions as well as the process was noted as trust, transparency, intimidation, youth representation, promotion and communication. Although the barriers that youth face are similar to the barriers that many face, intimidation is a barrier experienced more exclusively by youth which often seems to be the result of youth feeling unqualified to critique or participate in discussions in "adult" dominated arenas (City of Toronto, 2015).

Forsyth (2002) writes "youth…are perceived as incapable of participation. They are considered adequately represented by adults. The youth may be acknowledged in analysis, but they are not seen as a core constituency for participation and participation is not tailored toward their specific interests and needs (p. 1)." To tailor to the needs of the youth, Anaby, Law, Teplicky and Turner (2015) believe, the environment is a key role to supporting youth's participation and can serve as a focus of intervention to consider the perspectives of youth (p. 13388). Youth who are engaged and taken seriously as members of their communities gain important skills and a sense of civic duty that they carry with them into adulthood (Engelman & Hazel, 2010). Empowered youth are more likely to develop the critical thinking skills that allow them to constructively challenge authority and work toward more equitable systemic change (Ginwright & James, 2002). According to Morsillo & Fisher (2007), youth have credible and creative ideas on what can be done to improve the community, if society is prepared to listen (p. 48).

Research has recognized that the value of youth to their local surroundings are different than adults (Hart, 1979; Tunstall, Tapsell, & House, 2004). Yet, transportation planning is typically adult-oriented in terms of socially accepted uses and users. Youth activities and perceptions are not always intentionally addressed in transport planning. More often than not, they are incorporated into transport planning by either considering them as an implicit population or as part and parcel of planning for families (Knowles-Yanez, 2005; Freeman & Aitken-Rose, 2005; Frank, 2006). Checkoway and Schuster (2003) state the youth participate with eagerness, and others express interest but are unsure how to proceed, while others try to proceed but lack support from adults or face obstacles (p. 21). However, it is difficult to assess the overall scope or quality of their participation. Despite its incidence and potential as a field of practice, youth participation remains undeveloped as a subject of study in transportation planning.

Thus, if the field of practice of youth in transportation is underdeveloped, planners can begin by listening to the voices of their transport needs. The limitations of the public consultation process have been well documented, and young people in particular have faced numerous obstacles to be engaged, as noted in the *Youth Engagement Strategy*. To support youth in transportation planning, a lasting strategy must be proposed which includes youth in the decision-making process as an active participant in the planning of transportation plans and policies. The exclusion of youth from this process, is a form of injustice.

To conclude, the City of Toronto's Planning Division will require varied strategies and flexibility when engaging with Torontonian youths on city planning. City Planners when working with youth need to understand that engaging with youth is a consistent process of learning. For youth to play a role in transportation planning with planners, government officials, policy makers and advocates, there needs to be genuine inclusivity. The Planning Division must be proactive and responsive in determining what platforms Torontonian youths use to better engage them in transportation plans and policies. If youth have a say, or at least some input, they will have a level of ownership towards the achievements of such transport plans and policies. The outcomes of a process of consultation with Torontonian youths will not be easy. The youth will come to the table with different opinions and perceptions regarding the needs and nature of transit; but this process of action, reflection, and consultation is critical in helping a unified vision emerge. At the very least, it will begin a process of progressive social change where the planner and youth are agents of change.

THE FUTURE

Many small people, who in many small places, do many small things, can alter the face of the world – African Proverb

This research paper sought to expand the discourse and exemplify the impactful role youth can play in transportation planning. Youth are key stakeholders and should be included in the decision-making process, with reassurance that their participation is meaningful. The current approach to transportation is based on normative traditions that narrowly frame the role of youth; as a result, our planning and policies are often shortsighted and unimaginative. The youth enlighten our dull spaces with much needed creativity, idealism, and courage. Youth participation is much more than having youth join us at the table; it is a promise we make to invest in them and the future. In this section, I summarize the paper and provide recommendations for the Planning Division in initiating future youth participation and engagement.

The City of Toronto was the focus of my study, more specifically, the 2015 City of Toronto's *Youth Engagement Strategy* report published by the City of Toronto Planning Division, with the help of three consultant teams and ten members of the Youth Research Team (YRT). The goal of the report was to understand what issues matter most to youth, when and how to involve youth in city planning conversations and how to build youth understanding and engagement in city planning. The 150-page report, compiled through surveys, pop-up town halls, and workshops, identified transit and transportation as the topmost issue Torontonian youths care about. The youth mentioned issues of cost, the need for better and more frequent service, more diverse transport options, and cycling infrastructure as well as walkability.

In Toronto, the daily travelling frustrations of using city transport infrastructure is well known and documented as being unjust, uneven, and underfinanced. Individuals are constantly facing problems getting to their destinations in a timely manner (work, family and friends, or shop); and concerns of accessibility and distribution of transport networks, along with the availability of transport services between socio-demographic groups has brought ongoing debates of social and spatial justice. To add to the mounting problems, transit and transportation was noted as the top issue Torontonian youths are concerned with.

Presently, youth are progressively divided from the public, "adult" sphere, and they feel politically marginalized. If the Planning Division is to meet the needs of the present as well as future generations, the Planning Division will need to give youth a position and it should not seem as an "additional responsibility." In this position, the Planning Division will need to empower youth with the knowledge of transportation and share interactive plans and policies which provide up-to-date facts. Lastly, in this position, the Planning Division will need to provide opportunities for skill building and leadership. Ultimately, the goal is to have youth engaged year after year on a regular and consistent basis, but the first step is to get them involved. Since the publication of the 2015 City of Toronto *Youth Engagement Strategy*, no follow-up youth study was done.

To support youth in transportation planning, a lasting strategy must be proposed which includes youth in the decision-making process which will give them a role in the planning of transportation plans and policies. Continuing to exclude youth voices from the process is a disservice to us and an injustice to them. Thus, in utilizing CDA to analyze the *Youth Engagement Strategy* to examine the social inequality as it is expressed, signaled, constituted, legitimized and so on by language used by the Planning Division, I have the following recommendations for the Planning Division in initiating youth participation and engagement:

1. For Toronto to become the most engaged city in North America on urban planning issues, programs, and projects will require equitable youth engagement. It is important to think more broadly about how children participate in society. Planning Division must prioritize the interest of youths over theirs. The involvement of youth should not be solely for educational purposes, but rather a resource for the city. An emphasis needs to be placed on youth empowerment. Youth on average need coaching to assist them in seeing their strengths and possibilities. The coaching should include mentoring to help youth see how their lives can develop and improve differently. Moreover, setting up a safe environment for youth to develop and improve their skills, would help them to thrive and in turn, support their vision for the future. Thus, when transport plans or policies speak to the needs of the community, and how the youth can support to improve their communities, the youth will be ready to participate in action to improve their communities.
2. It is imperative for the Planning Division to achieve broad participation and representation; describe the decision-making process and the decision-makers; and build youth skills so they could participate effectively. Youth must be provided the ability to participate in

meaningful ways, together in sharing power with the adults participating. The objective should be to support the youth in their learning and empower them to effectively participate. Planning Division must recognize that Torontonian youths are the future and should let them be agents of their own future and change. The youth want to be included and want to play a significant role in the transport decision-making process that affects their lives.

3. Planning Division needs to give a boost to youth participation in the City of Toronto to shape a brighter future for all. If the Planning Division includes youth at all stages of transport policymaking, it will encourage valuable social change and create sustainable societies. However, for social change to occur, the Planning Division will need to move away from the illusion of participation (tokenism) to genuine youth influence. Youth participation should not be judged on the idea of decision-making being the only component; instead other factors and support mechanisms, like peer support and skills development are also key components. To conclude, relationships need to be built between youth and adults that show their interconnectedness, which will eventually lead to awareness and change. Planning Division must do better in speaking the language of youth and determine what platforms youth utilize to better engage them in planning discussions. One model of participation is not enough to effectively engage with Torontonian youth. The Planning Division should develop a diverse menu of strategies to ensure adequate socio-demographic representation.

To conclude, planners need to shift away from the traditional planning approach and genuinely have collaborative dialogue where there is an understanding of the diverse culture, views, and interests of Torontonian youth. Youth typically build their skills from their participation in play or work with one another, oftentimes without adults. If Toronto Planning Division is to promote Torontonian youth's ingenuity and creativity, the Planning Division will require to rethink how they currently engage with youth. Although, understanding how and when to engage youth on city planning issues is a start within the *Youth Engagement Strategy*, there needs to be a partnership. An adult-youth partnership would work more effectively due to sharing of power instead of the structure shown in Hart's ladder. A one-way communication between the City of Toronto Planning Division and Torontonian youths or Torontonian youths and the Planning

Division or multi-way communication among many stakeholders would mean a well-developed youth engagement.

If the youth are empowered, they will have the expertise, critical awareness, and opportunities to optimistically effect their own lives and the lives of other individuals and communities. To truly empower the youth, the City of Toronto Planning Division must be deliberate on the way youth are incorporated into communities and organizations. Empowering youth means to embrace youth in decision-making processes, honoring their voice, recognizing and fulfilling their opinions and suggestions, and lastly, sharing the adult power and authority to make the city a better place for both young people and adults alike. Transportation planners working on the Inside (Planning Division) and Outside (Consulting Firms & YRT) must begin dialogues and identify places where their agendas overlap, rather than compete. These conversations will surely reveal common goals and produce new and creative strategies to strengthen our efforts to transform youth-serving institutions, programs, and communities to better achieve good outcomes for all young people.

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APPENDIX A

YOUTH ENGAGMENT STRATEGY

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