A Model of Applied Psychology Research Defining Community Participation and Collective Identity as a Major Asset for Strategic Planning and Political Decision: The Project SIA (Social Inclusion through Accessibility)

Authors : Rui Serôdio, Alexandra Serra, José Albino Lima, Luísa Catita, Paula Lopes

Abstract : We will present the outline of the Project SIA (Social Inclusion through Accessibility) focusing in one of its core components: how our applied research model contributes to define community participation as a pillar for strategic and political agenda amongst local authorities. Project ISA, supported by EU regional funding, was design as part of a broader model developed by SIMLab–Social Inclusion Monitoring Laboratory, in which the relation University-Community is a core element. The project illustrates how University of Porto developed a large scale project of applied psychology research in a close partnership with 18 municipalities that cover almost all regions of Portugal, and with a private architecture enterprise, specialized in inclusive accessibility and "design for all". Three fundamental goals were defined: (1) creation of a model that would promote the effective civic participation of local citizens; (2) the "voice" of such participation should be both individual and collective; (3) the scientific and technical framework should serve as one of the bases for political decision on inclusive accessibility local planning. The two main studies were run in a standardized model across all municipalities and the samples of the three modalities of community participation were the following: individual participation based on 543 semi-structured interviews and 6373 inquiries; collective participation based on group session with 302 local citizens. We present some of the broader findings of Project SIA and discuss how they relate to our applied research model.

Keywords : applied psychology, collective identity, community participation, inclusive accessibility
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