

The Role of Community Activism in Promoting Social Justice around Housing Issues: A Case Study of the Western Cape

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Abstract : The paper aims to highlight the role that community activism has played in promoting social justice around housing issues in the Western Cape. The Western Cape is one of the largest spatially segregated provinces in South Africa which continues to exhibit grave inequalities between cities, townships and farms. These inequalities cut across intersectional issues such as, race, class, gender, and politics. The main challenges facing marginalized communities in the Western Cape include access to housing, land and basic services. This is not peculiar to only the Western Cape, the entire country is facing similar challenges however the Western Cape is seen as a fasted urbanizing province in the country due to tourism. Various social movements have been formed across the country to counter these challenges, however, this paper focuses on the resilience communities have fostered despite the myriad housing and spatial crisis they are faced with. The paper focuses on the Legal Resource's Centre's clients from an informal settlement called Imizamo Yethu based in Hout Bay Valley area. The 18 hectare settlement houses approximately 33600 people. On the 21st July 2017, Hout Bay experienced violent protests following an eviction order passed by the City of Cape Town. The protest was characterized by tensions within the community regarding the super-blocking initiative which aims to establish roads in informal settlements to ensure basic services. Residents against the process argued that there were no proper consultations done to educate them on what this process entailed. Public participation is one of the objectives the municipalities aim to promote however it remains a great challenge. In order to highlight the experiences of the LRC clients in relation to what motivated their involvement in the movement, how it felt their participation, and aspirations, the paper will employ qualitative research methods. Qualitative research methods enable the researcher to get a deeper and nuanced understanding of the social world in the eyes of those who experienced it. It is a flexible methodology that enables one to also understand social processes and the significance they generate. Data will be collected through the use of the World Cafe as a focus group method. The World Café is a simple, effective and flexible format for hosting group dialogue. The steps taken when setting up a World Café includes the following: setting the context (why you are bringing people together and what you want to achieve), create hospitality space (make participants feel at home and free to discuss issues), explore questions that matter, connect diverse perspectives (the opportunity to actively contribute your thinking), listen together for patterns and insights, share collective discoveries and learnings. Secondary data will be used to augment the data collected. Stories of impact will be drawn from the exercises. This paper will contribute to the discourse of sustainable housing and urban development and the research outputs will be disseminated to the public for learning.

Keywords : community activism, influence, social justice, development

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