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The influence of public participation on the Corridors of Freedom policy-making process and project: the case of Empire-Perth Development Corridor

Peens, Bradley C

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ABSTRACT

In South Africa public participation is the cornerstone of our democracy, yet it often has limited influence over the final outcome and does not form an important part of the policy-making process. I investigate a controversial corridor development process in Johannesburg – Empire-Perth Corridor of Freedom and how participation influenced the process and content. Through in-depth interviews with key individuals and through analysis of various documents I stitch together how this participation process unfolded. The policy process was highly complex and faced many internal challenges. It was carried out by consultants and initially was technocratic with limited participation but through a mix of resident mobilisation, opposition, and co-operation the process shifted to a more open one where new spaces for participation emerged where the public were able to influence *some* decisions. For a process similar to this one to run smoother it is essential the project team use graphics and illustrations which are context specific and capture the essence of the project. Participation needs to be embraced from the start and clearly incorporated into consultant's briefs, and a variety of spaces for participation need to be provided. These are essential factors contributing to the success of corridor policies which are arguably the most controversial in planning.

Key words: public participation, policy-making process, corridor development, resident mobilisation.