

CONTEMPORARY STUDIES AND METHODOLOGY IN URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING IN MALAYSIA



MARIANA MOHAMED OSMAN
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CHAPTER 8

THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN URBAN PLANNING

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout human history, people worked together to find solutions to challenges facing their communities. Community leaders and authorities met to discuss problems and called on other community members to add their perspectives, knowledge, and wisdom. As societies became more complex, decision making became the focal point in the relationship of communities and their local authorities. Often, decisions were imposed on communities by a group of powerful individuals residing in remote locations with different environmental, economic, or societal conditions. Recently, governments and organisations returned to more inclusive decision-making processes. Such processes are inherent to sustainability and designed to involve the public or their representatives in the decision making processes.

The community participation was considered essential in the agenda setting process for quality environmental planning and management (Sandbrook and Quarrie, 1992). The idea of community participation at the local level demands openness, accountability and plurality of opinions (Tonami and Mori, 2007). Participation is a powerful tool for gaining insights from many sectors of the community and helps to incorporate public values and community needs into decisions made by the authority (Solitare, 2005). Public participation can not only improve the quality of these decisions, but also effectively resolve conflict among competing interests, build trust in institutions, and educate and inform the public (Selman, 2000; Renn, Webler & Wiedemann, 1995).