

The Role of Public Space Activation in Acculturating Diverse Migrant Groups in Marginalized Residential Areas in Toronto

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Abstract

This paper explores the impact of a public space known as MABELLEpark on community engagement and acculturation in a residential street on Mabelle Avenue in Etobicoke, Toronto. The street is a hub for low-income newcomers, including migrants and refugees. It accommodates a diverse range of residents living in seven post-war apartment towers in an inner-suburban area. While the street was designed to accommodate young migrant professionals with upward mobility, it is currently a place of temporariness for many and settlement for others, especially those who fall under the Toronto Community Housing scheme. The paper examines the various factors that influence the Park's role in the larger context of the city's planning, funding, and infill development, leading to gentrification in the area. The street currently accommodates newer developments of condominium buildings, which bring further diversity (social, ethnic, and economic). Devised by urban policies, the segregation of such migrant-dense residential areas is discussed through socio-spatial analysis and by reviewing a few case studies and literature on placemaking, attachment, and belonging. The paper sheds light on the role of civil society organizations in bridging relationships between communities, particularly for migrants and refugees, and the role that city authorities, IRCC, and other actors play in unfolding the nestled nature that public spaces can play.

Biography

Rasha Arous is a researcher and a development practitioner with a wide range of experiences in the areas of urban development, informality, displacement, culture, and heritage-based development planning. She has worked with a multitude of international organizations and with the UN and has initiated and managed urban development programmes that address a multitude of urban issues, governance, and forms. She is pursuing her PhD in policy studies and focusing on displacement, culture, and development in urban settings in the developing world. She has completed master's degrees in the UK, Germany, and Egypt and has practiced site-engineering in Syria.