

# Exploring if and how equity and inclusion are considered in neighbourhood revitalization projects: A case study of downtown Sherbrooke, Canada

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**Introduction:** Recently, nearly 80million, including 25 million in public funds, were invested to revitalize downtown Sherbrooke, Canada, through the construction of office and residential towers, development of new public spaces and improvements of street aesthetics. These changes can improve residents' social conditions and health, and reduce social inequalities in health. However, the equitable and inclusive character of the revitalization project depends on whose needs were considered in its planning and implementation.

**Objective:** We explored how equity and inclusion were discussed in the context of the revitalization project, paying particular attention to young and marginalized people, who are over-represented downtown.

**Methods:** We conducted nine semi-structured interviews with key informants from the political, municipal staff, community organization and private sectors who were concerned by, or involved in, the downtown revitalization. Interview topics included intersectoral collaboration, inclusion of young and marginalized people in the project, anticipated challenges, and potential impacts of the revitalization. We conducted a codebook thematic analysis of interview transcripts.

**Results:** Although the needs of downtown young and marginalized residents were not explicitly part of the revitalization plan, key informants seemed open to collaborate for a more inclusive revitalization. Despite this, two parallel discourses emerged, distinguishing actors and sectors. We will discuss four topics on which discourses diverged: (1) revitalization aims; (2) how young people were defined; (3) communications and public consultations; and (4) how revitalization benefits were expected to materialize, and for whom. Findings can inform more inclusive and equitable neighbourhood development practices moving forward.

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