

Good Practice Guidelines

Participatory Approach to Core Area Development A Guide to Good Practice

DFID Research Project R 6860

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Compiled by:

Mike Theis, Tony Lloyd-Jones,
Sarah Carmona

Submitted by:

Max Lock Centre
University of Westminster
35, Marylebone Road
London. NW1 5LS



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The Max Lock Centre
School of Architecture and the Built Environment
University of Westminster
35 Marylebone Road London NW1 5LS
United Kingdom
Tel +44 (0) 20 7011 5000 ext 3131
Fax +44 (0) 20 7911 5171
Email: maxlockc@wmin.ac.uk
Website: <http://www.wmin.ac.uk/builtenv/maxlock/>

Department for International Development
Infrastructure, Health and Education
No. 1 Palace Street
London, SW1E 5 HE
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The Core Areas research was carried out between June 1997 and March 2001 by the following teams

In London

The Max Lock Centre at the University of Westminster:

(General research and case studies in all locations)

Dr Mike Theis

Tony Lloyd-Jones

Bill Erickson

Ripin Kalra

Mark Povey

Sarah Carmona

Sugeng Budhi Mulyawan

Haryo Winarso (research student at Development Planning Unit, UCL)

Lucy Rudwiarti (research student at Oxford

Brookes University)

Jitender Chaudhary

Chris Marsh

GHK Research and Development

(General research, Egypt and India case studies)

Dr Kevin Tayler

Fiona MacLuny

Dr Janelle Plummer

In India

(Delhi case studies)

Max Lock Centre, India:

Inderjit Sagoo

Kapil Sharma

Delhi Development Authority:

Dr K. Srirangan (research student at Development Planning Unit, UCL)

Romi Khosla Associates:

Romi Khosla

Moving Images:

Sanjay Barnela (video recording)

In Indonesia

(Jakarta and Bandung case studies)

Institute of Technology Bandung, Centre for Urban and Regional Planning Studies

Prof. B.S. Kusbiantoro

Benedictus Kombaitan

Mangisi Irene Pangaribuan

Sugeng Budhi Mulyawan

Miming Miharja

Wilmar A. Salim

Donny Prakoso

Akbar Trilo

Pitra Satvika

Dovi Horas Hutapea (video recording)

In Brazil

(Recife case study)

Federal University of Pernambuco, Department of Architecture and Urbanism, Recife:

Dr Circe Monteiro

Dr Ney Dantas

Maria Pessoa (video recording)

3rd year students of the BA in Architecture and Urbanism

In Egypt

(Aswan City case study)

University of Glasgow, Department of Geography:

Ahmed Eiweida

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These Fact Sheets set the current urban scene for the specific topic each cover and suggest ways and means within that topic towards achieving sustainable mixed-use core area development.

Bringing Stakeholders Together

Purpose

Bring all of the stakeholders together to establish an ongoing and open dialogue through participatory community planning.

With pressure growing to complete development schemes within restrictive time schedules more value is often placed on delivering a profitable product than on encouraging processes and forms of development that afford communities an opportunity to participate in the improvement of their own living environment. This situation can result in conflict and the delivery of unsustainable development.

With this in mind this Fact Sheet aims to provide those participating in mixed-use development with an understanding of community participation and participatory approaches to development. It also provides stakeholders with a guide to participatory planning methods.

Introduction

Community participation is an important process that provides communities with an opportunity to contribute towards the development of their own living environment. With local governments in many urban contexts experiencing limited capacity and increased responsibility, the need for active and meaningful community participation in urban development is now more urgent than ever before.

However, there are many different forms of participation and the extent and level at which they occur may differ greatly from one community to another. In some instances for example, participation may be passive, unresponsive or imposed by external agencies who want to legitimise a particular agenda, whilst in others it may be more dynamic, initiated by proactive local communities with concern for a particular issue. In any event, if mixed land-use is to be successfully encouraged and sustainable in core urban areas then participatory planning techniques involving all stakeholders are vitally important. For further information on planning and implementing a participatory planning approach see Fact Sheet 10.

Participation in Context

The nature and extent of participation will depend upon the social, economic and political environment within which the development process operates. It is therefore advisable that an analysis of existing and potential stakeholders be undertaken before the participatory development process begins (see Fact Sheet 1). Another important factor is that training and building of trust will have to occur throughout the process to ensure that all stakeholders are able to participate on as equal a basis as possible.

Perceived Advantages

- With the support and involvement of the community on a participatory basis from decision-making through to implementation, development is likely to be acceptable and more sustainable.
- By building upon the local knowledge-base of the affected stakeholders, development is likely to be more effective and targeted to local needs.

Perceived Disadvantages

- Participation can take a considerable amount of time, is costly and does not guarantee the success of a project.
- Democratic decision-making (though important) can become a de-stabilising factor with infighting between different interest groups.
- As effective community participation is a time consuming process there may be other concerns and priorities that require more urgent attention.

Box 6.1: Sri Lanka's Million Houses programme (1982-89)

Sri Lanka's million houses programme represents one of the best urban examples of action planning to date. The programme aimed to support and harness local community resources and knowledge in the construction and upgrading of their own houses. In order for this to occur in an effective and targeted manner decision-making powers were decentralised to local authorities and Community Development Councils, which were elected in each area.

The action planning process centred on participatory workshops between the communities, the National Housing Development Authority and the local authorities in order to reach agreed collaborative action plans on issues related to housing, health and infrastructure. Through the action planning process communities were able to exercise a certain amount of influence over the way in which government funds in the million houses programme were allocated. In this way national policy was able to adapt more precisely to local circumstances and funds were spent in a more efficient and targeted fashion (UNCHS 1996).

Participatory Planning Approaches (PPA)

Through the introduction of participatory approaches communities are given the opportunity to express their needs and address any concerns that they may have over a particular development. It may also (but not always) afford previously marginalised or disadvantaged individuals an opportunity to voice any concerns that they may not otherwise have had the opportunity of doing.

Popular PPA Methods for an Urban Context¹

Before any participatory planning process begins it is important that the various stakeholders involved identify the main issues and rank the importance they attach to them. Once this exercise has been carried out the community will be in a better position to identify what they can realistically achieve. The choice of participatory planning method will depend to a great extent on what the identified issues are, the level of stakeholder involvement appropriate and the level of support and resources available. The process can be initiated by any of the key stakeholders, although some of the methods will require greater levels of technical support and facilitation. The community should seek guidance and support from an intermediary (an NGO or voluntary organisation) or from the appropriate local government agencies in order to define what method would be realistically achievable whilst delivering the desired objectives. Summaries of the main methods that may be suitable for core area communities are given in box 6.2 (below).

¹ Further information on all of the methods listed and on alternatives can be found in Wates N (2000) 'The community planning handbook: How people can shape their cities, towns and villages in any part of the world', Earthscan Publications Ltd, London

| Box 6.2: Methods of Community Participation Suitable for Core Area Communities² | | | |
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| Method | Description | Advantages | Disadvantages |
| Action planning event | <p>Action planning is a <i>process</i> that recognises the importance of finding local solutions to local problems, by placing local communities at the centre of the decision-making process.</p> <p>It allows people to produce plans of action at sessions called for the purpose.</p> | <p>Can be used at any stage of the development process.</p> <p>Local residents, business people, professionals, officials and politicians all work together creatively over an intensive period.</p> <p>It builds upon the resources and knowledge of the community in collaboration with other stakeholders and professionals in order to find effective solutions to development.</p> | <p>Needs a facilitator to work effectively.</p> <p>Need to be at least a day to ensure full participation.</p> <p>The event is followed up to ensure action.</p> <p>Careful planning and preparation are essential.</p> <p>Costs can vary from little to tens of thousands of dollars.</p> <p>Requires formation of an agreed steering group to direct and implement solutions.</p> |
| Briefing workshop | <p>Simple, easy to organise working sessions to introduce people to a project agenda or brief; establish the key issues; motivate people and identify next steps needed.</p> | <p>Sessions are short and can be held with specific groups.</p> <p>People's contributions are not attributable unless agreed otherwise.</p> <p>Useful at the start of a project or to introduce an Action Planning Event.</p> | <p>Needs to be facilitated by one or more who will have planned a format to suit the context.</p> <p>Needs a good distributed written record to be effective.</p> <p>Cost of facilitators' fees.</p> |
| Community planning forum | <p>Open, multipurpose events designed in a three-stage format to secure information, generate ideas and create interaction between interest groups.</p> | <p>Need a minimum of advance planning and last only a few hours.</p> <p>Can be held any time but is most useful at an early stage in development and participation process.</p> | <p>Key ingredients are a leaflet advertising the event, its distribution, a venue and a facilitator all of which have a cost.</p> |
| Community profiling | <p>A means of building up a picture of the nature, needs and resources of a community with the active participation of that community.</p> | <p>Good first stage in any community planning process to establish agreed context.</p> <p>Group working for data collection and presentation.</p> <p>Visual methods to make process accessible to the illiterate.</p> <p>Results are in the public realm.</p> | <p>Results can be manipulated or make a poor impact without good facilitation.</p> <p>Strategy needed to avoid domination by the more powerful and aggressive.</p> <p>Separate sessions may be needed to obtain views of under-represented groups and women.</p> |

² Adapted from Wates N (2000) 'The community planning handbook: How people can shape their cities, towns and villages in any part of the world', Earthscan Publications Ltd, London

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| Diagrams | Highly effective visual way for communities to collect, discuss and display information at all stages of the planning process. | <p>Can be drawn on the ground with simple available materials.</p> <p>Complex issues can be represented simply with the right type of diagram chosen.</p> <p>Provides focus for discussing issues by both literate and illiterate people</p> | <p>Needs facilitator with knowledge of diagram techniques.</p> <p>Since the diagrams are temporary and ephemeral a photo or other drawn record is necessary.</p> |
| Field workshop | Communities draw up plans of action with technical experts, local facilitators and officials. | <p>Enables outside experts to assimilate local needs and culture.</p> <p>The technical team presents its recommendations to the whole community a few days after main activity sessions.</p> <p>Cost to the community is low except in the time they give.</p> | <p>To be effective the workshop should last over days if not longer.</p> <p>Success depends on advance planning and programming by technical team.</p> <p>Technical team members must be sensitive to understanding local needs and requests.</p> |
| Mapping | Effective non-verbal way of finding out how people view their area as a basis for understanding differences and stimulating debate for joint planning. | <p>Uses locally available materials.</p> <p>Allows the less articulate to express their views through symbols and colour rather than words.</p> <p>Costs need be only minimal.</p> | <p>Facilitator needed to explain and stimulate activity.</p> <p>Since the maps are temporary and ephemeral a photo or other drawn record is necessary.</p> |
| Planning aid scheme | Free and independent professional planning advice to communities that cannot afford to employ consultants. | <p>Many advisors are voluntary and this can lead to more direct and less lengthy advice than from paid consultants.</p> <p>The advice is free.</p> | <p>These advisory services are not universally available.</p> <p>Even in cities where available, communities may have difficulties making contact.</p> |
| Planning day | <p>A day-long event for a cross-section of the main stakeholders. Workshop sessions are held which generate ideas and options for development.</p> <p>A printed summary of the outcomes is produced, and a public exhibition may be held to present the proposals to a wider public.</p> | <p>The event can help to encourage further collaboration between the different stakeholders.</p> <p>One-day events can generate a wealth of ideas and information.</p> <p>The outcomes can form the basis for wider public consultation afterwards.</p> | <p>Requires venue, advance preparation and facilitator.</p> <p>For the event to be effective, participants should have good prior knowledge of the issues and background (can be achieved with briefing packs distributed prior).</p> <p>Adequate means of recording and following up the ideas are needed.</p> |

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| <p>Planning for real</p> | <p>A technique used to help communities and other stakeholders develop practical planning and urban design solutions to specific problems through the use of cardboard modelling and priority cards.</p> | <p>A visual, hands-on tool for community development. A popular tool for collaborative workshop environments throughout the world.</p> <p>Suggestion cards are placed on the model, which are then sorted and form the basis of an action plan, which is followed up by working groups.</p> | <p>'Planning for real' is a registered trademark of the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation.</p> <p>Costs (payable to the Foundation) involved for materials and training of facilitators. Total costs can range from \$800 to \$24,000.</p> |
| <p>Process planning session</p> | <p>It allows people to determine the most suitable form of public participation for their purpose.</p> | <p>Useful if held at an early stage in a community planning initiative.</p> <p>As many of the key interested stakeholders are invited to ensure all parties support the outcome.</p> <p>Costs can be minimal to participants if session is initiated and funded by NGO.</p> | <p>Requires venue, advance preparation and facilitator.</p> <p>The formal workshop format may not be suitable for poor communities with high rates of illiteracy.</p> <p>Can be sabotaged by those not wanting any process.</p> |
| <p>Risk assessment</p> | <p>A means to identify and analyse threats to a community since most communities face some kind of threat.</p> | <p>Communities can make their own risk assessment through a range of methods.</p> <p>End result should be a clear understanding by the community of the nature and scale of the risks faced.</p> <p>Main benefit is in obliging authorities to consider action to overcome identified hazards.</p> | <p>Experienced outside body needed to initiate and supervise the process.</p> <p>Trained facilitators required if real benefit is to be achieved.</p> <p>Involvement of local emergency services is important and may not be forthcoming.</p> |

Conclusion

Stakeholder participation within development projects can be a difficult and daunting route; however there can be real benefits from successful participatory planning methods. The ongoing collaborative dialogue that can be established between the different stakeholders during participatory planning techniques can be of benefit for the duration of the development process and for the long-term.

The type of technique that would be appropriate will depend upon the context of the development (including social, economic, physical and political) and the availability of technical support and resources. Some participatory methods require a tremendous amount of preparation and training, which may not be appropriate in all circumstances. It is likely that the stakeholders involved will require the help of an intermediary at the start of the process to help establish the objectives of the process, the most appropriate and achievable technique, and how it should be undertaken. The local community may require additional support throughout the process (from an NGO or voluntary organisation) to ensure that they can engage effectively in the technique.