

Action planning through digital workshop

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This paper discusses efforts of disseminating urban development program in a developing country setting by employing digital workshop in action planning workshops. The setting of urban development projects is usually very complicated. Socioeconomic background and people's properties are varied. That's why it is reasonable if problem approach is generated through a study on the potential of utilizing digital methods. Complicated variables also lead to study the possibility of not focusing on certain mode of workshop, since each workshop has its own plus-minus that might only be effective for certain variables in case study.

Action planning, communication, digital model, workshop.

Precedent

Communication is one of the most significant factors for having a successful urban development program. Neglecting aspects in communication, particularly concerning local people, usually leads to restrictive action from them, which in turn it will decelerate program implementation. Some models that have been facilitating information assessment from people are those known as action planning. These community-based information assessments were usually implemented in a workshop setting. Referring to Action Planning for Cities (Hamdi and Goethert, 1997), there are five action-planning workshops to be discussed, in line with developing prospective digital modeling for each method:

Community Action Planning or Microplanning; planning for Real; ZOPP (GOPP, in English: Goal Oriented Project Planning); urban Community Assistance Team (UCAT); participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA), this one by Theis and Grady (1991)

Discussion in this research works paper is generated by prospective implementation of Information Technology in accelerating action planning. While IT implementation in a developing country, which is the setting of cases discussed in this paper, still has controversy. On one side it is very potential since urban development program is usually considered a time-sensitive process. On the other side its economic feasibility is still questionable considering limited resources and infrastructures to implement IT.

Objective

The objective for this early step of this ongoing research is to identify a mechanism of digital modeling in order to facilitate action planning within the framework of disseminating urban development program in a developing country setting.

Methodology

Principally this research employs descriptive method. For this early step, research works focus on transforming conventional model, which is usually explored in each workshop into digital model. By the time of full paper submission it is to be expected that research will have shown essential technical improvement by digital model in accelerating and facilitating dissemination of urban development program.

Observations

Four steps have been identified as general characteristics of those five action-planning workshops. They are consecutively: preparing and identifying problems; analyzing problems and defining alternatives; publicizing findings; and defining next step. Based on these characteristics we can identify mechanism that

utilizes Information Technology (IT) to facilitate each step and to get the result in more effective and efficient ways. To define this mechanism, there are four IT variables that should be examined in each step: information flow; time; user and tools/materials (Hamid, 2003). Table 1 thru 4 shows the mechanism employed in each first four workshops.

Table 1. Information flow in Community Action Planning

Time	Source of information	Information flow	Principal media	Workshop organizer
Pre-workshop (short period)		Problem identification		Training
During workshop (2 to 4 days)	People (representatives) in group	Strategies options and tradeoffs	Charts	Moderator
		Planning for implementation		
		Monitoring		
		Follow up		
Post-workshop (short period)		Next workshop		

Table 2. Information flow in Planning for Real

Time	Source of information	Information flow	Principal media	Workshop organizer
Pre-workshop (3 months)	Customization	Building model		Training
During workshop (2 to 4 days)	People	Public meeting 1	Model and attached notes	Moderator
		Public meeting 2		
Post-workshop (short period)		Follow up		

Table 3. Information flow in ZOPP

Time	Source of information	Information flow	Principal media	Workshop organizer
Pre-workshop (short period)		In house and in country preparation		Training
During workshop (2 days to 2 weeks)	People (representatives) in group	Participation analysis	Project planning matrix (Charts)	Moderator
		Problems analysis		
		Objectives analysis		
		Alternatives analysis		
		Project planning phase		
		Follow up		
Post-workshop (short period)		Follow up		

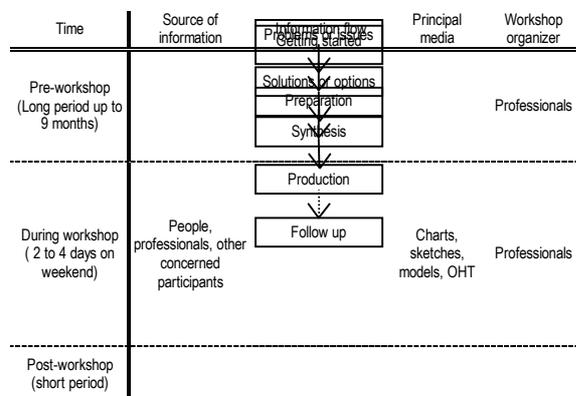


Table 4. Information flow in UCAT

Of those four variables, information flow acts as basis for developing mechanism of digital modeling in action planning. Information flow should be viewed from two aspects: people's perspective and government institution mission. From people's perspective information flow is dominated by people's aspiration about urban development issues. While contents of information flow from government institution is transmission of institutional messages. Generating digital model based workshops has supported seamless

activities and accelerated information flow. Another potential of digital modeling is its power to stimulate local people to participate giving fresh data that makes information assessment process more efficient and effective.

To have a maximum feedback, information flow should be empowered by networking system, which has significant role in accelerating dissemination of urban program (Burt and Taylor, 1999). Supported by current development of the Internet, the networking system will facilitate information flow in the implementation of urban development program considering its characteristic as a time-sensitive process.

The strength of Microplanning in its speed to utilize data gathering and problem identification is the main factor in supporting its application. Speed is very important in urban resettlement process. In Indonesian urban resettlement program setting, the structure of low-income communities may support this purpose. In this case, digital workshop can accelerate the gathering information process and the data manipulation.

Planning for real is effective in mobilizing people interest and support, a critical aspect in community-based development program. Through IT implementation using this method for getting information from people will be more efficient and pleasant. Simple models that become the main communication tool could be developed to be more enticing in computer simulation. On the other hand a series steps that should be conducted in the workshop could be replaced by only one package of computer application.

PRA is the most direct reference for tracking information flow since it's defined as a method of information collection. While the data collection is designed such in order that only relevant data to the purpose of the project is collected. Again the IT application will be helpful in data collecting process. PRA also uses visualization in that process. IT could facilitate the process and make it more communicative.

As a very structured workshop ZOPP has a very good potential in customizing institution policy to people. Since most of institution policy is usually evolved systematically. It is much different from 'awkward' information from people.

Many ideas of urban revitalization concerning low-income groups in developing countries come from non-governmental institution. It could be an academic institution or a non-governmental organization. This setting is the same with UCAT that has been applied mostly in more developed countries. IT has potential to substitute a relatively sophisticated but conventional communication tools in this workshop. On the other hand using IT will enable this method to be connected to official urban development program through the availability of networking system.

Role of Information Technology from Participants' Perspective

There are many possibilities offered by information technology in fulfilling the characteristic of getting information from participant perspective. Table 5 shows its relevant matrix that illustrates the value of IT impacts on each characteristic. Tentatively, the matrix shows that by implementing IT more advantages could be obtained than by using conventional method. Even though most of advantages are in institution part, at least this approach has indicated its better access toward information nodes. Plus-minus value in people's perspective means flexibility of IT that could be modified to be user-friendly machine. Yet this will

	People		Institution	
	Perspective	IT impact	Perspective	IT impact
Characteristic	- little bothering	+	- cheap	+/-
	- effective	-	- quick	+
	-easy to understand	+/-	- little skills	+/-
			- few people	+
			- effective	+

depend on the availability of skill-person in the program committee. While plus-minus in institution side is just a matter of time. IT implementation could be expensive in first investment but on the other hand it also becomes long-term investment.

Table 5. Value of IT impacts on each participant's characteristic

Conclusion

Characteristic of information flow can be viewed from two sides. Both are from the participant's perspective. First side is information flow that is dominated by people's aspiration on urban development issues. Second side is information flow that transmits any institutional message, mostly from government institution, to people. The main purpose of the four workshops as data gathering and problem identification methods supports application of their methods in defining and accelerating information flow. Principle method of PRA has also potential to be applied especially if it is viewed from its strength in getting fresh data directly from local people. IT implementation through digital media in supporting the workshops and PRA principles makes the getting information process more efficient and effective.

References

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