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A Conceptual Paper: Collaborative Planning for Community Empowerment in Urban Planning

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this conceptual paper is to develop a theoretical framework of collaborative planning for empowering community participation and influence in urban planning. Impact of neoliberalism in urban governance has contributed to the elitism in decision-making, thus benefited certain community segments. This underlined problem has implied the scarcity of conventional participatory planning in providing genuine participation to all community segments. Given that, scholars have advocated collaboration as the alternative to conventional participation to inclusively empower the community participation and influence in the urban planning. The framework is developed through literature survey as the method to collect and analyse the literature data. Substantively, this paper concluded that collaborative approach in urban planning enable all community segments to be educated and actively engaged throughout the process, thus enhance their influence in decision-making.

Keywords: Collaborative; Community Empowerment; Urban Planning; Urban Governance

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A CONCEPTUAL PAPER: COLLABORATIVE PLANNING FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT IN URBAN PLANNING

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Abstract

The purpose of this conceptual paper is to develop a theoretical framework of collaborative planning for empowering community participation and influence in urban planning. Impact of neoliberalism in urban governance has contributed to the elitism in decision-making, thus benefited certain community segments. This underlined problem has implied the scarcity of conventional participatory planning in providing genuine participation to all community segments. Given that, scholars have advocated collaboration as the alternative to conventional participation to inclusively empower the community participation and influence in the urban planning. The framework is developed through literature survey as the method to collect and analyse the literature data. Substantively, this paper concluded that collaborative approach in urban planning enable all community segments to be educated and actively engaged throughout the process, thus enhance their influence in decision-making.

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1. Introduction

Community empowerment has been underlined as one of the fundamental principles for New Urban Agenda in addressing the impact of urbanization [1]. Conceptually, urban governance indicates a complex and dynamic pattern of decision-making made by multiple actors comprises of government, community and other stakeholders in addressing the multidimensional issues [2].

Urban governance is responsible for providing efficient planning decision-making concerning the development of urban land to promote equity in economic growth as well as essential services to its dwellers [3]. Thus, participatory planning ensures equal access for all community segments to both social and economic opportunities. Besides, it allows a decision made via democratic way [4]; [5].

1.2 Problem Statement

From the context of urban planning, the impact of neoliberalism to the government development strategy has to witness

constant changes of demand and usage of urban land by the private sector, hence led to elitism in planning decision-making and benefits particular community segments [6]; [7].

The lack of capacity among the low-income group to genuinely participate and influence the planning decision-making can be related to the scarcity of conventional participatory planning in educating and collaborating with the community. It is merely tokenism by the government [4]; [5]; [8].

1.3 Purpose of this Paper

This conceptual paper is anticipated to explore the implementation of collaborative planning for empowering the capacity of all community segments to participate, hence influence the planning decision through a theoretical framework. Therefore, the question addressed in this paper is:

How can the practices of collaborative planning can empower both the

participatory and influence of all community segments in urban planning?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Concept of Urban Governance

Urban governance is defined as a process of coordinating multiple interests of urban stakeholder where each stakeholder come from varied perspectives, values and systems which make the coordination to be complicated and required continuous discussions and negotiations [9]; [10]. Urban governance comprises of key urban actors where the relationship and communication between these actors form a complex and dynamic connection that determine the direction of the urban development of the city [2].

There are four key elements that have been highlighted by Avis that can enhance the effectiveness of the urban governance. These elements are; the institutional framework between national government and subnational government, the capacity of governance specifically urban local government that socially and economically responsible towards its community, private sector's role as contributor for economic growth for a city; and also the political elementary in the governance system which influence the capacity of the urban local government as well as the effectiveness of policy-making and decision-making [11].

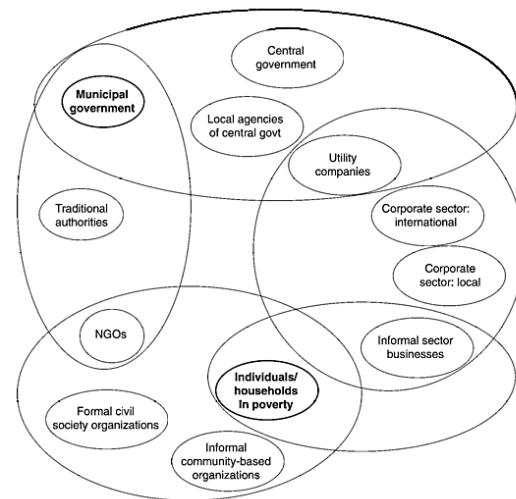


Fig. 1: Actors in Urban Governance Sphere

Source: [2]

In concern to the problem, three factors can influence the engagement of low-income group in the urban governance domain. These factors highlighted by [2] are; the inclusiveness of the political process in a city that let low-income segment to participate genuinely, the capacity of the urban governance to be more responsive towards the community interest, and also the provision of the avenue for low-income segment to access to their rights and be more influential.

2.2 Urban Planning and Urban Governance

Urban planning is concerning the planning and regulating the land use, distributing the spatial development, improving the well-being and quality of life of the people, generating economic growth and in the same time managing the resources and preserving the environment to achieve sustainability in development [12]. Urban planning is a medium in achieving sustainable development and environment [1]; [3].

According to Brown, there are three main approaches to urban planning; strategic planning which consists of metropolitan planning and local planning, development management or control that refers to the process of regulating and planning a development including preserving the

environment; as well as the action planning that address possible issue that need to be tackled through planning.

Theoretically, urban local government as the closest government entity to the urban community has enough understanding of the urban issues compare to their higher counterpart. This knowledge will then enhance urban local government as the urban planner in responding towards the community interest. Nonetheless, many local authorities in developing countries face challenges to effectively plan their urban areas due to weak planning control and outdated planning data [1].

Planning practices with top-down approach have resulted in the planning decision to focus more on national interest rather than the local [4]; [13]. As a result, it has left the local government in almost no-win situation, hence offer meaningless participation to the community [13]. This tokenism of traditional participatory planning in inclusively promote participation to all community segments has marginalized the low-income group from the planning process [5].

To enhance the effectiveness of urban governance, the capacity of urban local government in planning the spatial development, with urban local government been given sufficient autonomy to make a decision. Furthermore, the community including the low-income and other vulnerable groups should be encouraged to actively engage in the urban planning process in an effort to empower these segments in urban governance domain.

2.3 Community Empowerment in Urban Planning

Community empowerment has been underlined as one of the key principles for New Urban Agenda in addressing the impact of urbanization [1]. Scholars have constantly been described empowerment as an ideology that demand in fostering both the social policies and platforms to allow

the community to manage and gain control of their needs and way of life [14]; [15]; [16]. In other words, it refers to the enhancement of community capability, without excluding any segment from receiving the benefits of development [17].

Conceptually, community empowerment has been further defined as a catalyst for a smaller group of community, who is acting on behalf of their community hence slowly; develop into collective agenda [18]. Furthermore, Brinkerhoff and Azfar have operationally determined four main elements that contribute to the empowerment of community; community access to information, community participation in decision-making, community able to hold decision-maker accountable, and community have the capacity and resource to participate and voice their interests in the public process.

Pratchett et al. have defined successful community empowerment when the knowledge and capacity of the community to effectively engage in the public process including urban planning are improved. Moreover, successful empowerment is when the community believes that they can influence decision-maker, and the impact of participation has inclusively benefitted the community [17]; [19]. Also, Narayan indicates that community is successfully empowered when the urban local government has sufficient capacity to collaborate and build consensus in utilizing resources and solving their common problems [17].

2.4 Collaborative Planning for Community Empowerment

In addressing the complexity of decision-making in urban domain, and providing a genuine participation in the community, a new paradigm for community participation is needed. Therefore, collaborative planning has been promoted as an approach in addressing the need to empower the community to participate and

influence the process. This paradigm shift of participatory method is based on continuous discussion and collaboration has promoted greater trust and consensus; as well as improves the community knowledge and producing collective decision although it does not appeal to all [20]. Though the probability of achieving a resolution that appeals to all actors is ambiguous, nevertheless the approach made will ensure the objectives of the participatory process can be contented.

For that reason, collaborative planning has been promoted as an approach in addressing the need to empower the community to participate and influence the process.

Collaborative planning is an approach that offers the opportunity to various stakeholders to inclusively interact and participate in the planning process, thus addressing the complexity of interest of modern society [21]. Predominantly, collaborative planning is based on continuous communication between stakeholders, particularly community and planning authorities throughout the planning process to address disputes through consensus building [20].

Cooke et al. have elaborated the need for collaborative approach to go through multiple phases to establish a greater representation of community interest in the public process. Collaboration could be initiated by involving extensive stakeholders through numerous participatory means including forums and meetings [22]. Broad community participation will advocate genuine participatory, hence ensure the interest of marginalized segment to be considered.

There are ten keys to successful collaborative planning that have been identified by Gunton and Day which based

on their review of several works of literature (Table 1) [23].

Table 1. Successful Collaborative Planning
Key Success for Collaborative Planning

1.	Conditions that offer the opportunity for collaboration to be taken place.
2.	All interested stakeholders are well-represented.
3.	Ground rules to be clear and comprehensive throughout the process.
4.	All community segments to be educated and access to relevant information.
5.	Accountability element to be incorporated into the process including the stakeholder representative.
6.	The process should be adaptive to possible variation.
7.	The process is facilitating by skilled staffs and free from intervention.
8.	Timeframe and alternative decision-making process should be prepared.
9.	Well-defined implementation plan comprises of clear responsibilities, monitoring process together with mitigation measure.
10.	The implemented decision should be thoroughly evaluated.

Source: [23]

3 Theoretical Framework

The framework highlighted the relationship between collaborative planning and community empowerment in urban governance domain (Figure 2). Community empowerment in this framework is referred to inclusive participation in urban planning by all community segments. A genuine participatory process that merit ability to influence to a community can be justified through the incorporation of accountability and transparency in the process contribute to consensus building in making a planning decision.

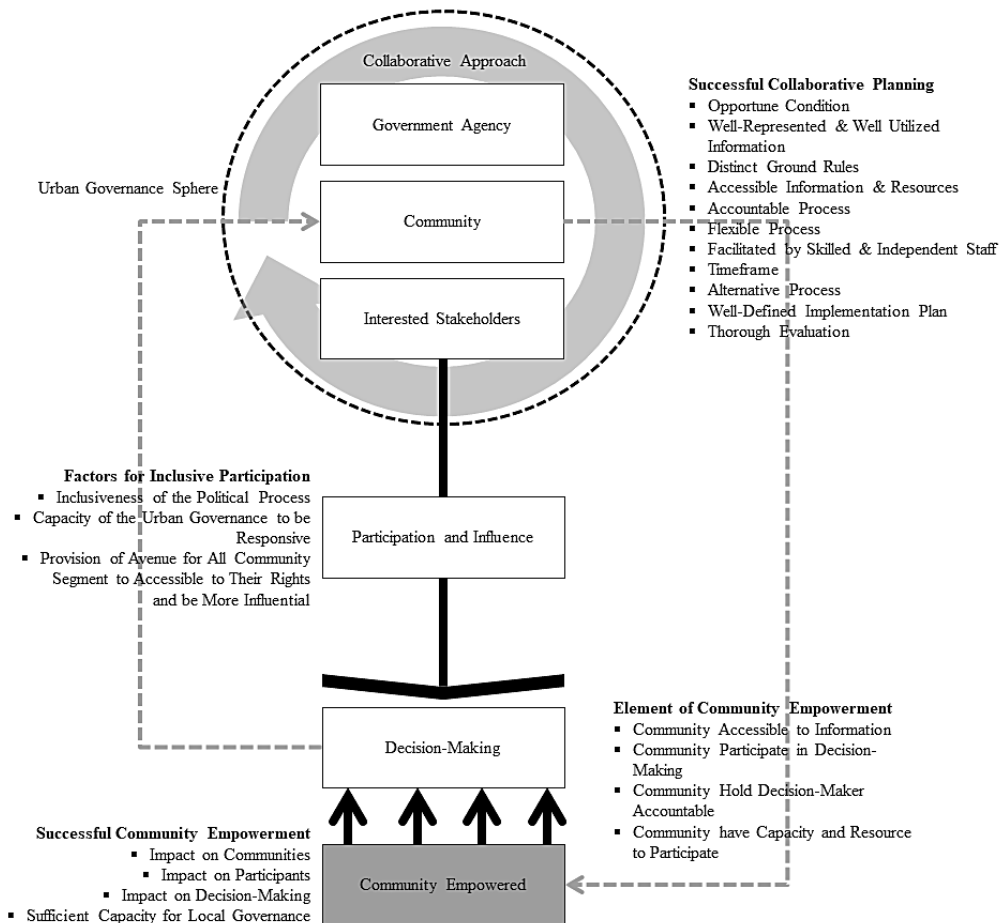


Figure 2: Theoretical Framework of Collaborative Planning for Community Empowerment in Urban Governance Domain

Sources: Interpreted from [2]; [17]; [18]; [19]; [23]

Therefore, it allows the community to exert their influence in decision-making. The successful elements of collaborative planning contribute to the empowerment of community where their experiential knowledge and capacity to engage effectively in the formal process has improved, hence benefitted the community as a whole. It also changes the perception of community in influencing their local matter; subsequently, improvise greater sense of community. Also, collective decision achieved through this collaborative approach which sees multiple actors continuously engage and communicates in deliberating alternatives to a common interest.

4 Method for Collecting and Analysing Literature

The conceptual paper has focused on the literature search and reviews as the method to collect and analyze the data. Initially, numbers of key literature have been identified using the “literature search” tool in Mendeley. Terms such as “collaborative planning” and “community empowerment” have been used to identify these literatures which later are reviewed to build a connection between both notions conceptually.

The relationship between the concepts of collaborative planning and community empowerment are grounded on the ideas of promoting a genuine participation to all community segments, hence enhance their influence in urban planning. It concerns the highlighted research question.

Therefore, to establish a complete picture of the relationship between both concepts, the identified literature [2]; [18]; [19]; [23] are reviewed and synthesized to establish a theoretical framework. These selected pieces of literature have highlighted common purpose; to promote meaningful and inclusive participation in the community.

The second section in this conceptual paper has linked the collaborative planning an alternative approach to conventional participatory planning in enhancing community participation and influence in urban planning, as well as considering the complexity of the relationship between multiple urban actors. The result of this literature review is the theoretical framework which is used to delineate the way collaborative planning can contribute to the empowerment of all community segments. It is supported by the underlined elements and factors that are derived from the literature.

5 Discussion

The literature reviewed in this conceptual paper is useful and constructive in accomplishing the purpose of this paper. Furthermore, it helps to address the question.

How can the practices of collaborative planning empower both the participatory and influence of all community segments in urban planning?

The community participatory and influence in the urban planning are empowered when all community segments are accessible to the planning process and its information. The accessibility to planning process and information allows the community to effectively participate and hold the decision-maker to be more accountable for his decision [18]. This is associated by the collaborative approach that enables all segments to be educated and well-informed of the process, hence well-

represented [23]. The facilitation of the urban planning process by skilled and independent staff or consultant has contributed to diverse engagement methods used throughout the process; indirectly acknowledge the importance for the process to be adaptive to the complicated relationship in urban governance domain [21]; [23].

Besides, a meaningful participatory process that merit ability to influence to the community can be justified through the incorporation of accountability and transparency in the process, hence contribute to consensus building in making a decision [19]; [23]. Constant evaluation of the implemented decision ensures community to hold the decision-maker accountable. As a result, it has changed the perception of community in influencing their local matter; subsequently, improvise greater sense of community [19].

6 Conclusion

This conceptual paper contributes to the continuous debate on how collaborative planning able to empower the community in urban planning. Conclusively, the paper has demonstrated through the literature reviewed of collaborative planning as a medium to enhancing the participation and influence of urban stakeholders including the community in the planning process. It is via knowledge enhancement, persuasion to collaborate and build consensus among the stakeholders.

The framework provides a guide for a meaningful participatory process which legitimates the ability of all community segments to be more influential, hence leading to better planning decision made.

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