Community Engagement in Trinidad and Tobago: Theory or Practice. Case Study of Neighbourhood Upgrading Programme, Waterhole, Cocorite.

21

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Abstract

Community Engagement is a buzz term used by academics, International development Organizations and planning and development practitioners. All RFPs, TORs and Technical proposals make mention of having community engagement in the development of the plans. Experience shows that it makes for a good technical proposal etc., but is it just rhetoric? Can community engagement be effectively achieved as outlined in the literature?

In recent times in Trinidad and Tobago the issue of community engagement made international headlines as there was protest action taken over the start of construction of a controversial section of a highway. Some were angered as they highlighted that their voices and concerns were not being heard and addressed.

What are the factors affecting effective community engagement in Trinidad and Tobago? To answer the question the case study of Waterhole was used as it is a microcosm of community engagement issues in Trinidad and Tobago.

This paper identifies theoretical and practical approaches to community engagement in land use planning and compares them with the practice in the case study Waterhole. On site interviews were done with the residents of the Waterhole Community as well as officials from the Land Settlement Agency in order to collect the data to answer the question posed.

It was found that, amongst others, ethnicity, power distances, violence, attitude of the state, limited budgets affect community engagement in Trinidad and Tobago. Suggestions for addressing these and other issues are highlighted.

Introduction

Trinidad and Tobago is a developing country and as such it undertakes many social and physical developmental projects in an effort to reach developed status. These projects are mainly funded by UNDP, IDB or other International donor agencies or organizations. These donor institutions usually have terms and conditions on how the projects are to be administered. One of these terms and conditions is community engagement. Despite stipulating the need for community engagement most people only become aware of the

plans or projects during the actual implementation phase of the project or those who are aware are not effectively engaged.

In 2010, a stop was made to the construction of a smelter plant in Cedros, Trinidad and Tobago after numerous protests showed that the residents of Cedros did not accept the plan that the government had made for the country and that they were not engaging the local residents.

In 2012, an IDB funded highway project made international headlines as a group called the Highway Re-route Movement protested on the site daily, one individual an environmentalist and activist carried out a hunger strike for 21 days in order that a review be undertaken, however, work still continues on the highway.

This shows that development if it is to be sustainable, successfully implemented and accepted must be people centred. Plans must not just be made for the people, the people must help to make and shape the plans. How to achieve this people centred approach is through effective community and stakeholder engagement.

Having examined the two scenarios above, there appears to be a disconnect between what is stipulated by development agencies through TOR's and policy guidelines. and how the projects are being implemented with respect to community engagement- its role and its importance. This leads to the question, is community engagement being effectively implemented or achieved in Trinidad and Tobago in order to achieve development? The question is important, as development can only occur through the implementation of plans. If plans and projects are rejected or stopped over protest action then development will be delayed or will not occur. If the government still goes ahead with a development plan that is not of the people the benefits of the plan will not be realized and development will not occur.

To answer the question, the Case Study of NUP of Waterhole Cocorite is used. The paper will highlight the challenges to community engagement in Trinidad and Tobago, and .factors affecting community engagement in Trinidad and Tobago. It also outlines the approach taken for the Waterhole project in order to compare it to best practice management approach for community engagement.

Methodology

On March 13th 2013, a survey in the form of a questionnaire was conducted in the Waterhole community. A total of 16 free response questions were asked to 10 randomly selected persons in the community. The sample included both men and women both young and old. The survey was to find out whether the community knows what squatter regularization is, what they see as the benefits of it, what community engagement means to them and whether or not they were satisfied with the approach to community engagement and how the engagement was done to facilitate the NUP in the Waterhole community.

Community Engagement

In order to answer the question fairly an understanding and definition of community engagement is necessary as community engagement means different things to different people and many people use the term loosely to describe very different approaches.

In order to investigate the question: "community engagement theory or practice?" This paper reviews the theory or approaches behind current engagement practices, examines international best practice and compares this with a local case study.

Community engagement is a term that is easily and repeatedly used in the area of sustainable development, but exactly what are the philosophies and ideologies that influences community engagement (how and who to engage)? Community engagement is a critical and indispensable component in any neighbourhood upgrading project. In a squatter settlement upgrading project unlike a conventional housing scheme or a sites and services project, the beneficiary population is already living on the site thus it is mandatory to involve the community in the preparation of the regularization and upgrading plans. (UNCHS/HABITAT 1985).

In the context of squatter regularization, community engagement can be defined as the voluntary and democratic involvement of beneficiaries in contributing to the execution of the project, in sharing the benefits derived from the project and in making decisions with respect to setting goals, formulating the project and preparing and implementing the plan. (UNCHS/HABITAT 1985).

Boles et al (2000) notes that community engagement is hardly understood though often used in developing countries without a serious attempt to critically analyse the different forms that engagement could take.

Community Engagement Theory and Practice

Collaborative Planning

The discipline of planning over time has developed approaches to engagement to land use planning and development. Theoretical approaches to engagement in planning have evolved to become known as Collaborative Planning in the UK and as Communicative Planning in the US. This type or method of planning has become extremely popular internationally in an effort to develop plans based on consensus.

Collaborative Planning evolved from a criticism of the technocratic model of planning where it was limited in application as it failed to recognize that planning was based on diverse values that could not be derived from science and that there was no optimal or correct plan that could be implemented without incorporating the interest of stakeholders (Guton et al. 2006). As such planning theory responded to the criticisms by acknowledging the role of goals and objectives identified through democratic political processes to set the framework in which plans were prepared. The challenge was to develop optimal means and structure to achieve citizen participation in the planning process (Guton et al. 2000).

Healey (2006) contends that all planning activity involves some interactive relation and some kind of governance process. She indicates that the metaphor "collaborative planning" was used and mis-used by politicians and policy makers in the UK from mid 1990's onwards to describe their ambition for a new form of governance.

Collaborative Planning was first inspired by the perception of planning as an interactive process (Healey 2006). Planning is a governance activity occurring in a complex and dynamic institutional environment shaped by wider economic, social and environmental forces that structure but do not determine specific interactions. Healey (2006) defines governance as the process by which societies and social groups manage their collective affairs. Planning and policy initiatives are concerned with maintaining and enhancing the qualities of places and territories. Collaborative Planning was motivated by a moral commitment to social justice, especially as realized in the fine grain of life experiences in the context of culturally diverse ideas about local environments and ways of life (Healey, 2006)

Collaborative planning is described as a logical extension of alternative dispute resolution (Gunton and Day 2003). The approach is such that no one is excluded from the planning discourse and decisions are arrived at collaboratively.

In practice, the planner's role in achieving the collaborative approach to planning is to use their technical knowledge to produce a strategy as "knowledge brokers and mediators" who play the role of critical friends. (Abu-Orf, 2005)For the planner to do this, the planning process should have inbuilt in it a two-way communication process in order that true collaboration can occur. Communication is an essential part of collaborative planning. It sounds simple but more often than not it is difficult to achieve for a multiplicity of reasons.

 Bessette (2004) has identified how community engagement can be achieved using the communication model.
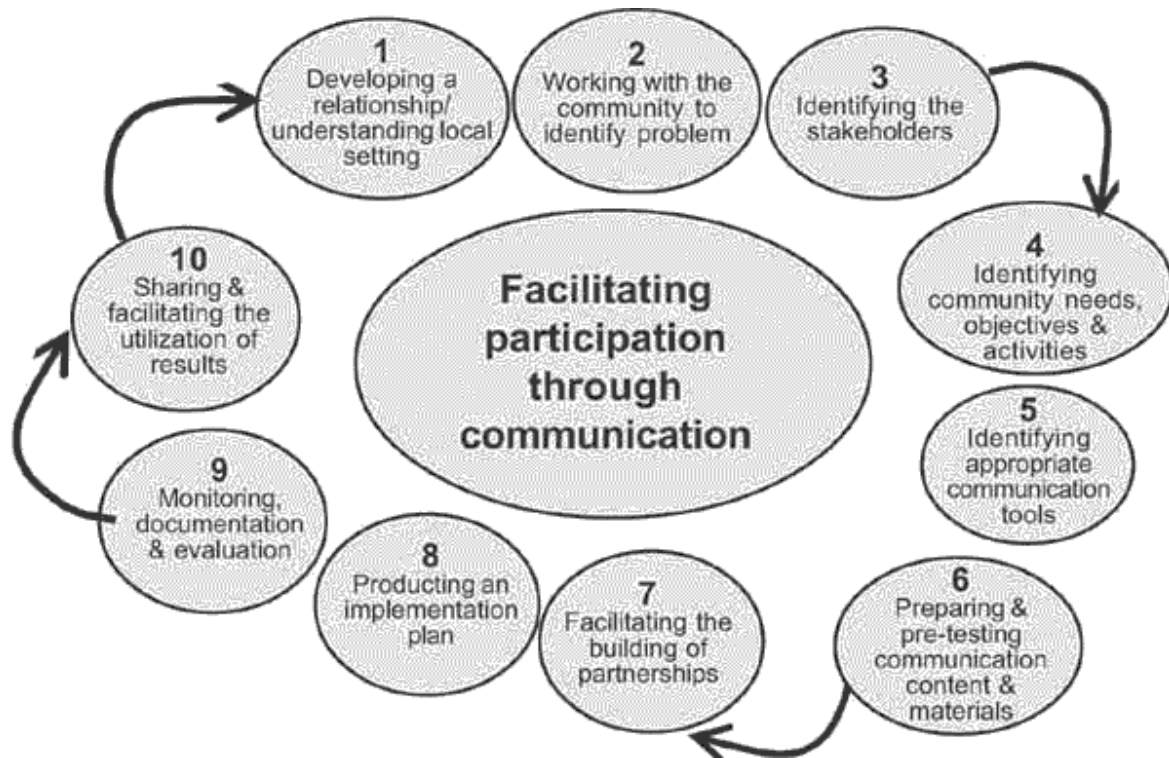
Figure 1 The PDC process (Bessette 2004)

He notes that the Participatory Development Communication Process (PDC) is about building mutual understanding and collaboration, facilitating a partnership and accompanying a development dynamic.

The ten (10) steps that make up the PDC model are:

1. Developing a relationship with the community

2. Working with the community to identify problems

3. Identify the stakeholders

4. Identify community needs, objectives and activities

5. Identify appropriate communication tools

6. Preparing and pretesting communication contents and materials

7. Facilitating the building of partnerships

8. Producing an implementation plan

9. Monitoring, documentation and evaluation

10. Sharing and facilitating the utilizations of results

Bessette (2004) notes that the PDC process is not sequential; some of the steps can be implemented in parallel on in a different order. The process is a continuous one not a linear one.

Collaborative Planning as a theory has become accepted. However advocates and critics are unanimous in their call for more research to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of Collaborative Planning and to identify best practices guidelines for effective use of the collaborative model (Conley and Moote, 2000).

Planning For Real

A lot has been said and written about collaborative planning, about the need for inclusion and communication, but does not really show how community engagement can be attained and more often than not collaborative planning efforts because of the focus on communication can end up as talk-shops.

Gibson (1989) presents and offers a practical how-to of how collaborative planning can work.

This approach by John Gibson has been used since the 1970's as a means of giving local people a "voice" and professionals a clear idea of local people's needs in order to bring about an improvement to their own neighbourhood or community (MIT, 2013). The approach is an evolving style of community planning that does more than accept local knowledge but it integrates the search for local knowledge with community- building and capacity-building (Forester, 2005). It is based on an "Eyes down, hands on, rubbing shoulders, a lot less by mouth" approach (Forester, 2005). Planning for Real uses simple 3- dimensional models as a focus for people to put forward and prioritise ideas on how their area can be improved. It is a highly visible, hands-on community development and empowerment tool, which people of all abilities and backgrounds find easy and enjoyable to engage in. The problems and improvements are identified through pictoral "option" cards. This is to overcome the difficulties of verbal communicating by providing an "alternative currency" to words as a means of exchanging views and information (MIT, 2013). This highly participatory approach to planning appears to be especially effective in engaging citizens who avoid processes that require written comments and public presentations before large gatherings.

Planning For Real is designed to catch the eye and tempt the hand of everyone involved-residents, planners etc. together around a model, home-made by the residents themselves with planners joining in as time allows. This creates a working not just a talking relationship, based on a mutually rewarding experience and not just a statutory requirement for engagement. The Planning For Real tool comes in a kit and can be purchased. In recent years the Planning For Real Kit has become popular in some developing countries and has been used in the Caribbean (MIT, 2013). This approach is highly recommended for urban upgrading projects due to the underlying philosophies. However, there is danger in using this technique as in any other participation technique, where planners will adopt a top-down approach rather than using it to facilitate a community building process (MIT, 2013).

The PDC by Bessete and the Planning for Real by John Gibson represent the ideal models of community engagement as outlined earlier represent the approaches that should be

applied to the Neighbourhood Upgrading Project context. This is because of their effective practical approaches to community engagement in a logical and room for iteration.

These models show not how any government or consultants will engage the community, but rather it shows what steps must be done to say that real engagement has taken place. At times the engagement approach taken by the government or consultants can be skewed for their benefits. These accepted models remove this potential bias for example, in the PDC model by the fact that sharing and utilization of information is necessary in the engagement process.

The approach to community engagement carried out in the Waterhole NUP is compared against the accepted models presented earlier to make the case of community engagement: theory or practice?

Background

Trinidad and Tobago is a twin island republic nation located to the south in the Caribbean region. Just like many countries in the West Indies, it was under colonial legacy. It gained Independence in 1962 and since then had started on a quest of development through western ideologies such as urbanization and industrialization. This led to significant rural-urban migration as people were moving away from the plantations into the urban areas in search for other types of jobs. Today 73% of Trinidad and Tobago's population lives in urban areas, the second highest figure after the Bahamas. Data shows that there is a steady growth in urbanization as an annual change rate of 2.9% from 2005 to 2010. This increase in the urban population has significantly increased the demand for housing and urban services, thereby distorting the housing and land markets

As Trinidad and Tobago was a colony, the resident population was brought primarily to work as slaves or indentured servants on the plantation for production purposes only, the masses were therefore deprived of access to wealth and assets such as land. This is so as of today, 47% of households have inadequate or lacked documentation of the land they have built their houses on.

It is estimated that there are 328 squatter sites in Trinidad and Tobago and as time goes on as the issue of access to affordable housing and land as well as overall social and economic policies are not tackled new squatter sites will spring up adding to this figure.

Urban squatting in the country is significant and chronic. Urban squatting occurs along the Western coastal areas and along the foothills of the Northern Range. Urban squatting in Trinidad is characterized by physical, social, and economic problems. Problems include sites being located in vulnerable areas, poor road and drainage infrastructure, lack of solid waste and waste water disposal systems, poor and sub-standard housing quality, non-conformity to planning standards, high levels of crime and violence, juvenile delinquency, high levels of poverty and unemployment coupled with lack of skills and lack of access to basic social services.

Squatter Regularization in Trinidad and Tobago

The Land Settlement Agency (LSA) is the state agency under the Land Tenure Regularization Act of 1998 to legalize irregular squatters on public lands. The Act has identified those sites which are to be regularized.

The IDB through the LSA embarked on the Neighbourhood Upgrading Programme (NUP) where component 1 deals with Squatter Regularization.

Under the NUP the LSA seeks to improve the living conditions of beneficiaries in selected squatter sites by regularizing the layout, allocating lands for non-residential use to provide necessary services, upgrading the physical infrastructure and providing security of tenure.

Waterhole

Waterhole is an urban hillside squatter site located in the Greater Port of Spain region. The site is located north of the Western Main Road in close proximity to a major shopping mall, West Mall.

The Waterhole Community just like all the other Squatter sites is the visual and physical sign of state neglect. They represent the state's inability to provide access to land and housing to the low-income brackets. However, these communities also represent the pride of the residents who were able to upgrade the area though their own self-help approach in order to incrementally develop the area to what it is today; from the make shift drains to the wooden footpaths are all what was done by the community over time. There is a pride there that is so deep that it can affect the way the state intends to address the issue of urban squatters in Trinidad and Tobago. Many residents say "here was nothing before; it is I who developed here through toil and sweat." Mangin (1967) describes this as where " The squatters can boast of a major accomplishment where planners and governments have failed."

Community Engagement in Trinidad and Tobago Overview

Trinidad and Tobago has a strong civil society movement, including NGOs and academic institutions such as UWI.

Reports indicate that there is a view that using participatory processes is not yet seen as an integral part of planning and management, but as a separate add-on activity. It is noted that while some participatory approaches have taken place, the general consensus is that they have been ad hoc, small scale local initiatives that have not given an equitable role in decision-making to key stakeholders.

It is felt that there is need to institutionalize participatory approaches in policy and practice. As it stands the Town and Country Planning Act and the Squatter Regularization Act do not speak of community engagement. The Environmental Management Act speaks about a Social Impact Assessment which is very limited in scope.

In Trinidad and Tobago there is an extremely strong perception that while government agencies and key decision makers speak the language of participation, there is no true understanding of what participation means and its true potential value in management of

livelihoods (CANARI, 2000) . This has manifested itself in the low levels of commitment to participatory approaches and decision-making power and authority (CANARI, 2000) .

Participation for material incentives is an increasing common model in the country with government and externally funded projects. In some cases community organizations and members are increasingly unwilling to become involved in engagement initiatives unless there are direct financial benefits. There is little focus by both government and civil society to adopt the wider and more complex benefits of community engagement (CANARI, 2000) .

Approach to community Engagement NUP Waterhole

The following information was derived from interviews and questionnaires conducted with the people in the community. In November 2011 the Neighbourhood Upgrading Project Waterhole, Cocorite was started. The community engagement for the project primarily was:

- A community presentation at the end of each phase. The consultants would present the final output of each phase to the community.

- The hiring of a community liaison officer whose role was reduced to escorting the consultants throughout the site, which was necessary due to the increased levels of crime and violence in the Trinidad and Tobago society and to prevent any negative actions related to how the community typically views outsiders.

The NUP project was broken down into three phases:

- Land Use Concept

- Land Use Plan

- Sub-division Plan

The Community of Cocorite, Waterhole did not know officially that the NUP had started, at the Land Use Concept stage. The community was only aware of the project after the LSA had already accepted the Land Use Concept Plan and the Consultants had to present the concept plan to the community on March 28 2012. Actually, work had already started on the next phase of the project, all without real community input, as there was a lag between acceptance of the concept plan and the community presentation.

Community Presentation

The LSA only planned for 3 community meetings and this highlights the low level of importance placed on community engagement as viewed by state agencies. This approach, in theory, is ineffective. In practice, the community engagement was not effective as the project came to a stop after the first community presentation.

The execution of squatter regularization projects should be examined with an aim of trying to spread the limited resources evenly. This can be done by developing cost- effective solutions for each component of the process including data capture and engagement, as practice shows that without proper engagement the project will not be accepted by the community and may therefore fail.

The presentation took the form of a power point presentation with maps, and text. The officials and consultants were seated at a head table emphasizing the power divide. Neither leaflets nor print-outs were made for the community to review before or during the presentation. The presentation was not interactive, the residents indicated, that interactive secessions are more effective. Questions had to be asked at the end of the presentation as to not distract the presenter. Residents indicated that during the presentation, they wanted to ask questions but having to wait until the end they forgot or were not interested anymore in raising them. A controlled interactive delivery setting would have been preferred by the community.

The community expressed concern, anger and resentment that such a detailed presentation was made to them, without any input from them. Questions were asked, who told you to draw that line there, who told you what roads we need, who did you consult in the community? The community evidently wanted to be involved in foundational aspects of the plan for example, the land use designations and the determination of relocation as was evidenced in the infield surveys.

Residents indicated that racial derogatory remarks were made to the presenter based on ethnicity. The Waterhole community is predominantly of African descent whilst the presenter is of East Indian descent, expressions like "why you don't go back to Caroni" (predominantly Indian community) and "we do not want your plan" were hurled at the presenter. In Trinidad and Tobago the ethnicity factor stars in all aspects of the society and as it stands sensitivity to ethnicity issues in development and planning have to be considered in order to inform effective community engagement practices when the issue of ethnicity can be problematic.

The community indicated that the day of the community presentation was poorly scheduled as the Waterhole community had already planned their community football tournament in the same venue and on the same day as the presentation. Some residents indicated that the LSA had no respect for their community spirit and that the LSA was wasting their time with the presentation. This fuelled aggression throughout the community presentation. The LSA was threatened, and then were asked to leave. Some residents indicated they do not agree with the threats, but the football was planned first. A good approach to community engagement should have consulted the community about a proposed date and then it would have been found that the date by the LSA should have been shifted.

At the presentation some critical questions were asked but the community found that they were not answered clearly, for example, the issue of relocation, the issue of compensation, and the issue of not being able as a resident to contribute financially to the regularization exercise. The poor response to these questions made the residents uninterested in the exercise stating that it is just a usual waste of tax payers' money. Some indicated that when the LSA is willing to answer those questions they could come back to the community.

The Waterhole community appears to be suffering from "engagement" fatigue as many plans are presented with no implementation. The community is an ideal representation of neglect. Some residents indicated that they listened intently to the presentation despite what was happening and were actually looking forward to the LSA coming back in 2 weeks' time to discuss and decide on conclusions with the community. But the residents say this never happened and now they are tired of "talk-shops" and false promises. Residents say they will be willing to participate but presentations alone cannot suffice as engagement. The residents indicate that after the big presentations, meetings must be held to capture the community's ideas and to incorporate them in the final plan.

Community Liaison Officer

It was accepted by the LSA that the need for a Community Liaison Officer is critical; however the definition of the role was not clear from the onset and therefore the benefits of having community liaising as an engagement tool was not realized.

The selection of the community liaison officer proved to be an unpopular one with the community. He was selected because he was known to the consultants. From the interviews it was gleaned, that having understood the need for a community liaison officer, at the initial stage of the project, the community should have been aware of the project in order that the community themselves could select a person or a group of persons that will be best suited with the necessary skills and knowledge to represent the community. This would lead to them being accepted and having consensus with the residents in the community.

The community liaison officer was deemed to be too political in order to be able to speak objectively for the community as a whole. Residents, who indicated they were opposed to him, said they will not participate in the process and do not want to be part of the project.

It was revealed that the Local Government Councillor should have had a major role on the project; he should be the one taking all the concerns and engaging the various stakeholders on behalf of the community. However, some residents indicated that the councillor does not do his job. A Guardian Newspaper report highlights that the councillor along with the Minister of Social Development were touring the community and they were pelted with rolls of toilet paper months after the community presentation. Incidents like these show that community representation is a very sensitive one and as such the person or persons must be able to be effective at it.

The heckling by the community towards community officers, officials illustrate the extent to which the community will go to express their concern, non-acceptance and disapproval of a project or programme. How they respond to this power difference is in an aggressive and disrespectful way, which will act as a deterrent to other agencies, other interested community liaison officers to be eager to effectively engage as they fear they will be attacked in a similar manner.

The comparison of the case study with the best practice selected will lead to a conclusion about how to correct the local process.

Analysis

The PDC model identifies ten (10) steps necessary for successful engagement, however the NUP approach was limited as it only focused on presenting the final output. In this respect the approach can be defined as consultative as opposed to engaging. Consultation is defined as when one decides on what they want to achieve and ask others what they think of it, whether the persons respond or not is insignificant as those being consulted have no real say in the final decision.

Urban squatter sites in Trinidad and Tobago are known to be socially volatile, hence the need for security in order to ensure safety whilst carrying out community work in such areas. There seems to be a view that the community liaison officer role is to be the security. It is however important to note, that the roles of security officer and community liaison officer should not be mixed up. These are separate distinct roles, security has a purpose and community liaising has its purpose. At times one person can fill the roles, but both roles must be fulfilled, not one at the expense of the other. Acceptance of the person or persons to fulfill these roles by the community is paramount to the success of an overall engagement strategy and hence for the success of the NUP.

The approach to engagement by the LSA assumed that the consultants along with the LSA already knew what the community wanted, but this was far from the case. Institutionally in Trinidad and Tobago, the culture towards development is a top-down approach where the government or consultants selected by the government select a development problem, in this case squatter sites, identify potential problems, make decisions, present decisions and implement all without community engagement. This top-down approach is one where the government thinks that it is doing the squatters a favour and therefore the community is seen as a mere beneficiary and not central to the decision making process. The concept that beggars cannot be choosers come into play in the top-down approach to development. This top-down approach cannot work in urban squatter communities as it intensifies the power divide and its consequences between the community and the technocrats deciding on and implementing the plan.

For successful development, communities like Waterhole must be involved in identifying their own development problems, in seeking solutions and making decisions about how to implement them.

From the data collection exercise, it was revealed that the community needs a more participative approach to NUP. As such Planning For Real should be used. If planning for Real is utilised, the community could be certain that having invested time for such an approach the government is serious about the project. Residents do not feel to be engaged as they deem the government as not serious about squatter regularization. Planning for Real serves as a psychological incentive to participate where the community and planners work hand in hand with each other.

The name Planning For Real alone speaks volumes, as the community sees planning as a waste of time, they do not understand the process. The community indicated most times the planning exercise end up as a written report with no implementation and more often than not, the community is excluded from the process. Planning for Real would bring awareness

to the community about the different factors planners have to consider in developing the best plans for a community.

With Planning For Real, where residents are actually involved in shaping their community, the community's attitude towards planning will change. In addition it will create a neutral environment where sharing of knowledge would occur as well as easing tensions. With this approach, the issues of race and power differences will take a back seat as the community will be able to determine for themselves that progress is being made with true community input. The community will have no time for exaggerating the differences; focus will be placed on building community models and shaping their own space. This high degree of empowerment will be greater than causing conflict that is synonymous with consultative approaches.

 With respect to the community presentation approach adopted by the LSA, according to Tony Gibson, having community presentation is very limiting. This is so because he states that presentations tend to privilege the more highly educated and professionally trained members of the community while marginalizing others. This is indeed true, as residents indicated that they were confused when the maps and "big words" were presented on the slides. Planning For Real is ideal and effective in engaging citizens who avoid processes that require written communication and public presentations before large gatherings.

As was identified from the survey, that the liaison officer was deemed too political to represent the community, it is paramount that engagement activities and its objectives do not become politicized or used for political party purposes. This is a general trend with respect to community engagement in Trinidad and Tobago.
The community engagement approach by the LSA failed to develop a harmonious relationship with the community, an antagonistic relationship between the community and the LSA developed after the community presentations. the approach failed to have mechanisms in place where residents can come to the consultants with concerns as well as to help them identify their own problems. There was a need to ascertain what the community sees as critical in the NUP, was it the deed of lease, was it contracts to upgrade the community, was it the need to be involved in every step of the way?
The approach further failed to utilise other stakeholders necessary for the success of such a project. the LSA is the only agency responsible for squatter regularization in Trinidad and Tobago. However squatter regularization is complex and requires the expertise that one agency alone can realistically have. The LSA does not have the administrative, financial and technical resources to truly operate like a specialised agency, therefore, the need to involve other stakeholders for support and to capitalize on their different strengths. For e.g. the Citizen Security Programme an organization whose objective is to reduce crime and violence operate in the Waterhole community but it was not involved in the NUP.
The approach failed to pretest their engagement approach. No preliminary community engagement meetings formal or formal were held at the start of the project to gauge how the community reacts to project in order to develop the best engagement plan based on how the first meetings went. If this was done the LSA would have realised that public presentations after decisions have been made would not have sufficed. these kick- off meetings could be used to "test the waters" and offer the opportunity to see what the community wants explain, how to explain it, identify the best ways to incorporate community ideas and inputs into the

plan , all in order that it can be analysed and presented back to them. if you have a pre-planned approach, by testing it, one will be able to see how the community responds and then continue with the approach or make necessary changes to improve the engagement process.

Finally, community engagement can cease to be meaningful if it is undertaken purely for the sake of having to be seen to engage. This is important to note as there are consequences to flawed participation as the case study highlights. Community engagement must be well thought out and implemented properly, success is not measured in theory but in practice. If the practice is of community engagement is not effective it can lead to community ill-will, aggression, violence and stop to development projects at the expense of those who need development to happen.

Conclusion

Community engagement in Trinidad and Tobago is not in line with the desired practice. The approach needs to be more collaborative as opposed to consultative in approach. It is all ideal to have community engagement as a foundational principle but if the community itself is not the centre of the development, that is, if the models presented are not effectively utilized in Trinidad and Tobago, it is just pure rhetoric.

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