

Community Engagement in Sustainable Development

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Abstract (250-300 words)

Cities accommodate large populations in smaller areas offering innumerable opportunities for living, work and play thus creating an alluring urbanism. India has been undergoing rapid urbanization and the biggest challenge faced by Indian cities is to create sustainable built environments integrating infrastructure and natural systems to create this urbanism. Urban design has an essential scope to create an urbanism which is sustainable and dynamic. With accelerated rate of urbanization coupled with lack of urban design initiatives, community engagement in decision making, Indian metropolitan cities tend to possess a chaotic urban realm, degraded environmental quality and civic issues. This raises concerns about ecology, sustainability and specifically quality of urban living. Involving community in various decision-making processes is imperative as it promotes ownership, good governance, vibrant urban realm with inclusive, sustainable development. Community participation efforts in India at various levels is used as a tokenism for pre-set outcomes. UN Sustainable Development Goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities also reiterates on enhancing capacity for 'participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management' as a target. Engaging communities through urban design and governance processes can aid in aligning Indian policies towards achieving Sustainable Development goals. This paper will discuss the importance of community participation in urban design initiatives at metropolitan city level, success of urban design projects engaging community, through literature and case studies of metropolitan cities in Asia. This paper will suggest appropriate community participation strategies in urban design that can be implemented in South India.

Keywords: Community Participation, Urban Design, Sustainable urbanism, Sustainable Development

BACKGROUND

For many of its citizens an urban environment tends to be the most preferred site of their permanent home to live, work and play. In developing countries quality of living in urban environments comes with its share of civic issues and chaotic urban realm, leaving its inhabitants to undesirable living conditions. Fundamental belief of this study is that citizens should be granted the basic right to participate in the processes shaping the environment. In the long run this helps in creating an ecosystem of stewardship, ownership, equity towards surrounding environment thus creating sustainable urbanism. Sustainable urbanism when practiced leads to environmental, social, and economic sustainability of the built environment and aims to create livable and resilient communities. Engaging citizens is a critical component of sustainable development, as it helps to ensure that the needs and perspectives of community members are taken into account in the planning and implementation of sustainable development projects. Community participation is an effective tool to engage citizens in any level of development.

STUDY OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The main objective of this investigation was understanding the importance of community participation in sustainable urban planning and development, identify stakeholders, the conditions set for the community involvement process. This is achieved through literature on participatory processes and Case studies of successful urban planning and development projects in metropolitan cities in Asia with community engagement strategies implemented.

IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Public or community participation, functions on a democratic ideology that citizens who are affected by decisions of administrators, executors, various stakeholders, should have a say in decisions that affect their lives because they will become better citizens. Community Participation as a tool can be used effectively in Urban Planning, urban design, and enhances the potential to achieve a more sustainable outcome. Community participation in urban design refers to the involvement of residents, stakeholders, and community groups in the planning and design of the built environment in urban areas. This can include involvement in the design of streets, public spaces, parks, and buildings, as well as in the development of policies and regulations related to urban design. Community participation can take many forms, including public meetings and workshops, design charrettes, and online engagement platforms. Other innovative forms of participation include Visioning exercises, Pop-up events, Walkability audits, Community-based participatory research, Co-design sessions, social media, Collaborative mapping, etc.

It is often seen as important for ensuring that, the needs and perspectives of community members are reflected in the design of their cities, communities and neighborhoods, and for building a sense of ownership and pride in the built environment. It also helps to make the overall development more inclusive, accessible and sustainable. Community participation can also lead to more creative, innovative and efficient solutions, as well as to more resilient and livable communities. Community participation can also help to identify potential conflicts and challenges early on, and to find ways to address them.

The value of community participation in the development processes of our built environment, has been acknowledged by Planning scholars such as Brody et al. who argues that citizen participation can generate trust, credibility and commitment regarding the implementation of policies. Moote et al. suggests that, in a participatory democracy, conflict can be resolved during the planning process itself thus ensuring timely implementation of completed plans. Despite these understandings effective public involvement on urban development is not fully adopted or practiced.

Sherry Arnstein in 1969 proposed the Ladder of Citizen Participation which is one of the most influential models to measure effectiveness of democratic public participation. Arnstein's typology of citizen participation is presented as a metaphorical "ladder," (Fig 1) with each ascending rung representing increasing levels of citizen agency, control, and power. In addition to the eight "rungs" of participation, Arnstein includes a descriptive continuum of participatory power that moves from nonparticipation (no power) to degrees of tokenism (counterfeit power) to degrees of citizen participation (actual power). Arnstein equates community participation to citizen power in achieving the social imperatives of our time.

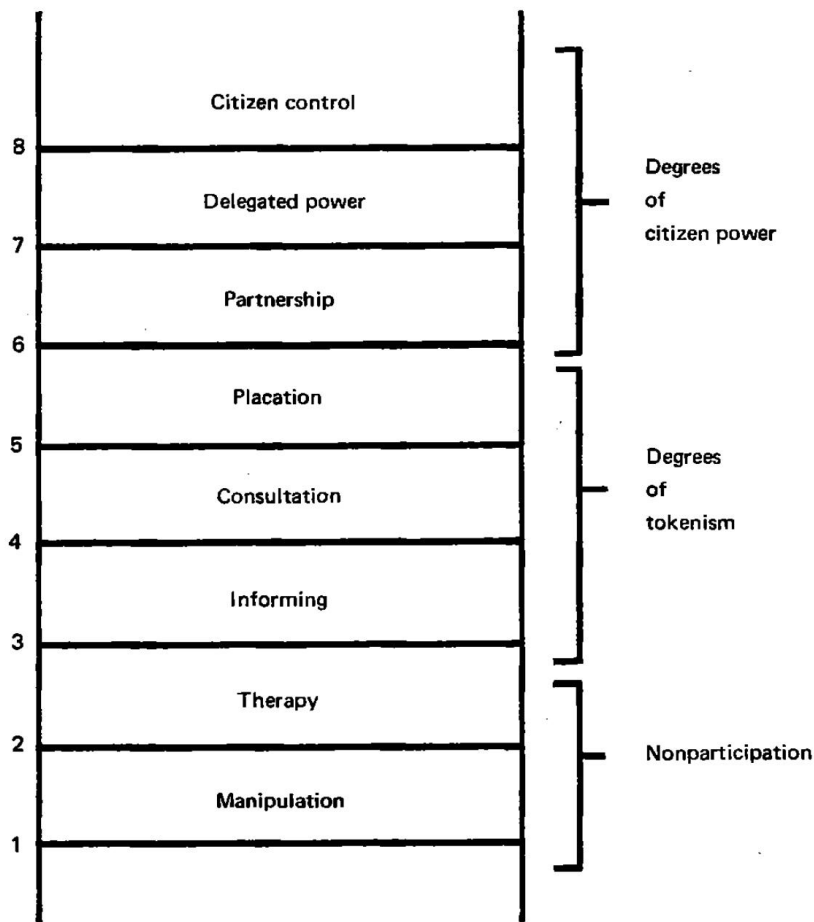


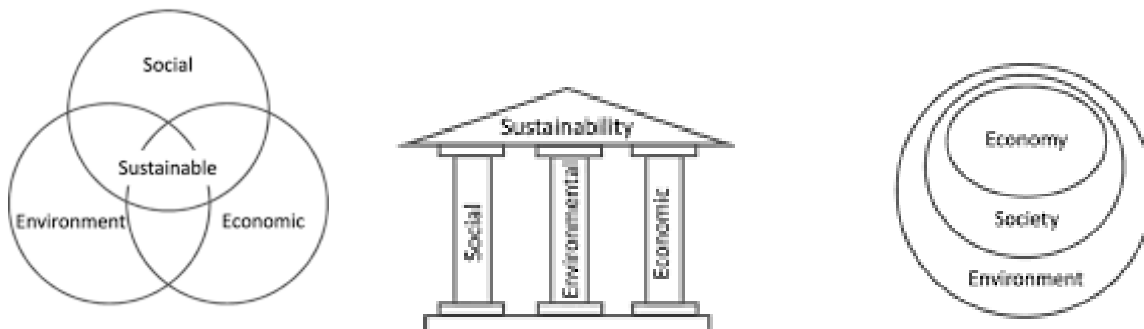
Fig 1 The original 1969 illustration of Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation as it appeared in the Journal of the American Planning Association. The Ladder features eight "rungs" that describe three general forms of citizen power in democratic decision-making: Nonparticipation (no power), Degrees of Tokenism (counterfeit power), and Degrees of Citizen Power (actual power).

Community Engaging in Planning in India took root in the post-Independence period, in the form of several town planning and development acts. However, these were mostly restricted to objections and suggestions from the affected population at the stage of policy formulation and draft plan preparations for existing land use (Haque, 2018).

In India Community engagement in urban development can face several challenges, including lack of awareness and understanding, socio-economic disparities, language barriers, power imbalances, limited resources, and bureaucratic hurdles. Addressing these challenges requires a sustained effort by all stakeholders, including government, civil society, and the private sector, to create more inclusive, meaningful, and effective engagement processes.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE URBANISM

Sustainable Development as an ideology was popularized through the report of the Bruntland Commission (WCED 1987), which defines Sustainable Development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED 1987). Sustainability has become the ideal goal of many of the World Nations and communities or a state towards which we strive (Brown and Peterson 1994); and consequently, the idea of sustainability as a process has become commonplace. The practice of sustainability is a holistic approach that involves balancing economic, social, and environmental considerations to create a more equitable and resilient future. Though economic, social and environmental were seen as three pillars of achieving sustainability, with our current living practices protecting environment has become a key concern and requirement which will indeed ensure economic and social sustainability.



Source: Wikipedia

As part of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, United Nations has adopted a set of 17 global goals to Transform our World, called the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs are a universal “Call to Action” to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. Aligning with these goals Sustainable Developments can ensure an intergenerational equity, meaning that the well-being of future generations is considered in addition to the well-being of the current generation. It's also deeply interconnected with the idea of resilience, the ability of systems and communities to adapt and thrive in the face of change and uncertainty.

With sustainable Development being a broader concept, Sustainable urbanism, is a specific holistic approach to urban planning and design that promotes sustainable development in urban areas. Community participation is critical for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Some specific ways in which community participation can support the achievement of the SDGs include:

SDG 11: Making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable: Community participation can help to ensure that sustainable development projects in urban areas are inclusive and responsive to the needs and perspectives of all community members.

This can help to promote social and economic sustainability, as well as to improve the livability and resilience of urban areas.

SDG 1: Ending poverty: Community participation can help to ensure that sustainable development projects are inclusive and benefit all members of the community, regardless of their social or economic background. This can help to promote social and economic sustainability and to reduce poverty.

SDG 2: Zero hunger: Community participation can help to ensure that sustainable development projects are responsive to the food security needs and priorities of the community. This can help to promote food security and to reduce hunger.

SDG 12: Ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns: Community participation can help to ensure that sustainable development projects are designed and implemented in ways that minimize their environmental impact and promote sustainable consumption and production patterns. Community members can also provide valuable feedback on the environmental impact of development projects and how to minimize it.

SDG 13: Taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts: Community participation can help to identify potential climate change challenges and conflicts early on, and to find ways to address them. Community members can also provide valuable feedback on the climate change impacts of development projects and how to minimize them.

SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions: Community participation can also help to promote peaceful and inclusive societies and to strengthen the rule of law, by encouraging participation in decision-making at all levels of government, including local, regional and national. This can help to ensure that sustainable development policies and programs are responsive to the needs and priorities of the community.

Role of Community participation achieving SDGs at the Planning and Urban design levels can be implemented through:

	Sustainable Development	Sustainable Urbanism
1	Identifying sustainable development goals	Identifying local needs and priorities
2	Building community support for sustainable development	Building ownership and commitment
3	Enhancing social and economic sustainability	Improving design quality
4	Improving environmental sustainability	Building resilience
5	Encouraging participation in decision-making	Promoting social equity and inclusivity
6	Supporting co-creation and co-design	Encouraging community-based solutions

The role of community is discussed through some case studies of Urban Development projects in Asia.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION CASE STUDIES IN ASIA

Study #1: The Cheonggyecheon Stream in Seoul, South Korea

The Cheonggyecheon Stream in Seoul, South Korea is a notable case study of urban revitalization through community participation. The Cheonggyecheon Stream is a restored urban waterway that runs through the heart of Seoul. The stream was covered over with concrete in the 1950s and 1960s as part of a modernization effort, but in 2003 the city government began a project to restore the stream to its natural state.

The restoration project was developed through a community-led process that involved local residents, city officials, and design professionals. The project included the removal of the concrete channel, the restoration of the natural stream, and the construction of new parks, walkways, and bridges along the stream. The project also included the creation of new community spaces and the relocation of small businesses that were displaced by the restoration work. The restored stream has become a popular destination for locals and tourists and has helped to revitalize the area and create a more livable city. The project has also been credited with improving air and water quality, reducing heat island effects, and enhancing biodiversity.

Moreover, the Cheonggyecheon Stream project has been considered as an example of how to revitalize a city's historic fabric and culture, and how to balance the needs of the community with the city's goals of modernization and urban development. The project also received international recognition for its successful integration of environmental, social, and economic sustainability. It has shown how community participation can be used to achieve environmental, social, and economic sustainability and to create more livable and resilient cities.

Study #2: The Kampung Admiralty in Singapore

Kampung Admiralty is a public housing development in Singapore that was developed through a community-led process. The development is designed to provide housing for seniors and is located in the heart of the Woodlands Town Center. The project was developed in collaboration with the Housing Development Board (HDB) and the Ministry of National Development (MND), and it was designed to provide a range of services and amenities to support the well-being of seniors, including healthcare, social support, and recreational facilities.

The development was designed to be a sustainable and livable community, with features such as green roofs, solar panels, and rainwater harvesting systems. It also includes a range of communal spaces, such as a community garden, a rooftop terrace, and a community hub, which provide opportunities for social interaction and community building.

The Kampung Admiralty project is an example of a community participation initiative in urban design and development, as it was developed with the active participation of the community members, and it was designed to meet their specific needs and priorities. The

process included a range of engagement activities, such as focus group discussions, surveys, and workshops, which helped to gather feedback and input from the community. This approach has helped to create a development that is responsive to the needs of the community and that promotes social inclusion and a sense of belonging.

Study #3: The Pudong Riverside Promenade in Shanghai, China

The Pudong Riverside Promenade is a public waterfront development in Shanghai, China. It was completed in 2018 and it is located along the Huangpu River, in the Pudong district. The development was designed to provide a new public space for the city and it aims to improve the connection between the city and the river.

The Pudong Riverside Promenade is a linear park that stretches for about 7.5km along the river. It includes a range of amenities such as bike lanes, public seating, playgrounds, and water features. The design of the promenade also incorporates sustainable features such as rainwater harvesting and energy-efficient lighting.

The development of the Pudong Riverside Promenade involved a community-led process, as the city government worked with the community members and local organizations to gather feedback and input on the design of the promenade. This process included public consultations, workshops, and other forms of engagement, which helped to ensure that the needs and perspectives of the community were taken into account in the design of the promenade.

The Pudong Riverside Promenade is an example of how community participation can be used to create sustainable and livable public spaces. The promenade provides a new public space for the city and it improves the connection between the city and the river, while also incorporating sustainable features. Additionally, the community-led process helped to ensure that the needs and perspectives of the community were taken into account in the design of the promenade, making it more inclusive and responsive to the community's needs.

Study #4: Magarpatta City, Pune, India

Magarpatta City is a planned community located in the city of Pune, India. An example of participatory urbanization in India, it was developed through a community-led process that involved the active participation of the residents.

The development of Magarpatta City began in the early 1990s, when the residents of the Magarpatta village came together to form a cooperative society with the goal of transforming their community into a sustainable and livable urban area. The society, called Magarpatta Township Development and Construction Company Limited (MTDCCL), was responsible for the planning, financing, and construction of the development. The landholding patterns in the new township were established through land pooling and readjustment (LPR), as an alternative to land acquisition. The development of Magarpatta City was based on the principles of sustainable urbanism, and it included a range of features such as mixed land use, compact development, walkability, and public transportation. The development also

incorporated a range of sustainable features, such as rainwater harvesting, solar energy, and waste management.

One of the key aspects of Magarpatta City's development was the active participation of the residents in the planning and implementation process. The residents were involved in decision-making through various forms of engagement, such as public consultations, workshops, and community meetings. This helped to ensure that the development was responsive to the needs and perspectives of the community, and that it promoted social inclusion and a sense of belonging.

CONCLUSIONS

Community engagement initiatives though a noble effort to create sustainable societies face a lot of challenges including lack of citizen awareness, Socio-economic disparities, Language barriers, Power imbalances, Limited resources, Bureaucratic hurdles, Political instability, Cultural and traditional values, Political dynamics, etc. The Case study examples of Cheonggyecheon Stream in Seoul, Pudong Riverside Promenade in Shanghai and The Kampung Admiralty in Singapore reiterate the fact that despite challenges the urban development projects can be made successful and inclusive with involving community at various levels of design and decision-making processes. In India though participatory efforts can be seen at planning at development levels, the participatory process has to be measured to understand the effectiveness of participation. Some suggestive community participation strategies that can be implemented in Indian cities to promote sustainable urban developments include community outreach and education, community design workshops, online engagement platforms, community-based organizations, inclusive decision-making, follow-up and monitoring, etc. Community engagement has to be implemented and encouraged from grassroots level to ensure equitable, sustainable developments, livable cities with thriving urbanism.

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