

Relevance of communities in projects and how to manage

M5X01875

DAVID SVATOŠ (P150071)

1 INTRODUCTION

Buildings and their construction had always huge impact on environment, their surroundings, also affected various communities. Every of these aspects should be dealt with respect to the given situation. Although problem with communities could be the most challenging. Interest of people to be involved in construction projects in their surrounding is increasing. It is understandable, because population is growing and therefore more people are affected during whole cycle of the building.

Is it worth to involve communities in project or should they be uninvolved? By my opinion yes, they should be involved. Of course, depending on project type. Mainly projects influencing society in their surroundings.

2 BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

There are various reasons according Nick Wates (2000, pp.4-5) to let people take part in project.

- **Additional resources and better decisions**
Government and even construction companies often don't have proper information and knowledge of problems and possibilities in an area. Involving local people can bring additional or necessary resources to complete projects effectively and sufficiently for all parties involved.
- **Building community**
Cooperating and seeing a project coming its completion creates sense of community and results are more pleasing
- **Compliance with legislation**
Involvement of communities is often statutory requirement and more likely this requirement will increase.
- **Democratic credibility**
Giving people option to participate in decisions affecting their lives increase people's responsibility and deepens their democratic behaviour, which is positive to strengthen society as whole.
- **Easier fundraising**
It is quite common that grant-making organisations prefer or require community involvement before assisting financially.
- **Empowerment**
Involvement helps people to build their confidence and improve their skills and cooperation, which helps them in future involvement and even in their personal lives.
- **More appropriate results and people's satisfaction**
Designs can be improved and adapt before construction. That leads to faster construction process, better and effective material usage, also and importantly to people's satisfaction with results
- **Professional education**
Professionals are gaining better insight into the communities and local conditions. Not only professionals work more effectively with better results, but also community can obtain new knowledge.

- **Responsive environment**
The environment can be easily changed and adapted as people's needs and visions change.
- **Faster development**
As people gain some experience and better understanding of possibilities, it enables projects to develop much faster and it helps to avoid time-wasting conflicts often connected to lack of information.
- **Sustainability**
Because people help to create the environment, they will appreciate and take care of it responsibly and furthermore it is also good way of preventions to vandalism and often costly repairs.

Above listed benefits are one of the most obvious. Of course, they can differ according location or even culture, but at least some of them will still be achieved.

3 HOW TO MANAGE

Deal with various groups of people with different backgrounds and different opinions is and will be challenging process. Therefore, it is good, prior to everything else, to set some boundaries and limitations to all interested and involved parties to handle cooperation well and effectively. Achieving success of community's participation is depending on couple of unwritten and socially common rules.

Developers or professionals behind projects should be honest with other involved parties. Due to the honesty and transparency problems can be solved before or when they occur, possibly even with better and long-lasting results, than if they would be dealt with behind closed doors. It also helps the community stick together and face the problem rather to avoid it.

To even get people's attention and make them be willing to attend and cooperate, they must be given a vision, all the possibilities they can achieve and gain. It is also good to inspire them, to think about future of their surroundings and its possibilities. Important condition is to be realistic. If people are given proper and realistic vision, they can manage and run their own projects and it also helps to bond the community together (Wates, 2000)

To be able to successfully cooperate and achieve the best results possible it is good to try involving all affected groups. Surprisingly, children or adolescents can be also involved. For example, consider construction of new playground or community centre. We are not expecting professional expertise. What are we aiming for, is idea or vision how they are going to use it or what are they expecting to be there. These requirements can differ place to place. Returning to the playground, in our fictive locality there is huge interest of young people into skateboarding and biking, therefore it is unnecessary to build many climbing walls as was designed before.

Construction is in most cases long and tiring process, therefore it is good to prepare some plan how often people will meet, what are they going to deal with. It is also good consider breaks between gatherings or implement various events even interactive ones. Events can be a brilliant way how to make people focus on specific problem, give them opportunity to see problems from different perspectives or just use these event to bond more as community. Good way how to introduce a problem to the people is moderated talk with experts and professionals.

Not only they will be able to obtain deeper knowledge on specific topic, but they more likely will be given answers to their questions. There are also positives for the designers. During these talks and debates new ideas or topics, that haven't been considered before, can be implemented.

Workshops are another way how to make people cooperate. In case of project, where final design and look is not yet specified, workshop with professionals, designers, architects and communities is a great way how to achieve genuine and tailored designs satisfying large group of people (Sanoff, 1999). Nowadays, modern informational technologies are widely used and using real-time projections or using virtual reality helps people to properly imagine the whole project better than ever before. It is a brilliant way of demonstrating designs or even changes real-time, so people can see the process and changes to comment them.

Games are very useful in early stages of community planning, to help them bond and work together or to prepare the community to a specific upcoming challenge. Normally, there is no expected result or specific outcome. Type of game may and in most cases will differ project to project, but very common is involvement of role-play (Wates, 2000).

4 CONCLUSION

By my opinion, involvement of communities in projects is important and its significance will only grow. In most cases communities guarantee successful project. It is not easy task to manage effectively. Although it is worth our effort, if we want to create project positively influencing wide range of people. Even we can achieve many benefits, we must have in mind, that we cannot satisfy everyone. There will always be someone who will not be pleased with results, but if we can manage communities properly and effectively, we are able to minimise number of dissatisfied people.

References:

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