

Investigating the challenges and realization of participatory planning in Taiwan

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In the 1990s, community-planning systems were introduced in Taiwan by the government. As a result, the government gradually established institutions of community planners and “community empowerment”, thus bringing about rigorous citizen participation in community planning. While participatory community planning has developed to some extent, the participatory condition of urban planning is still not mature. In Taiwan, there are common examples of that such as the planning process of Periodical Overall Review of Urban planning and infrastructure planning.

Institutions are “frameworks of norms, rules, and practices which structure action in social contexts” (Healey, 2007, p. 64) and international research shows that successful participation and integration of diverse interests in planning depends to a significant extent on sufficient legislation and enforcement mechanisms (Boswell Franklin, 1998; Sinclair and Doelle, 2003). They can be formal or informal (North, 1990).

“Formal institutions include laws, rules, and regulations; informal institutions comprise norms, values, and customs that structure action. Both formal and informal institutions influence public participation. Formal institutions, for instance, shape the legal requirements of public participation. Informal institutions underlie the cultural motivations behind participation in a given social context (Ganapati & Ganapati, 2008).”

This paper will first investigate the institutional variables, or the institutional limitation that either affect the extent and the condition of participation, or hinder the development of participatory planning in urban scale by means of conducting a pilot

study. The pilot study will interview organizations or people that used to apply participatory approach in urban planning or infrastructure planning practices. Secondly, this paper will classify ideals of the literature for participatory planning, hence the gap between the ideal and the reality of institution could be identified more clearly for improvement.

The purpose to conduct a pilot study is due to little literature on participatory planning in light of institution in Taiwan. As a result, this pilot study aim to explore key issues of participatory planning practice in its regulatory context and clarify institutional variables and institutional limitation of what my major research might study. What regulations limit or influence participatory planning? How do they limit or influence it? The key issues that the interviewees mentioned above provide would help to identify the institutional reality of the participatory planning in Taiwan.

Second, I will classify the literature of the ideal participatory condition, goals and functions of participatory planning into several criteria as evaluation framework. The literature has provided various classifications for the function of participatory planning and participation in general to identify the function of participatory planning (see, for example, Ran, 2012; Richardson, 1983; Coenen et al., 2001). Generally, it is classified as substantive, normative, and instrumental reasoning. The functions and the goals of participatory planning could be concluded with a standard or indicators to judge whether the participatory process achieved the goals of participatory planning or applied the functions of that. In short, this paper would classify the reasoning of the literature into several criteria as evaluation framework that can evaluate the reality in regulatory context.

Comparing the institutional influence and the institutional limitation to the evaluation framework, this study could finally clarify the gap between the reality in light of regulatory context and the ideal participatory planning and what challenges for participatory planning in Taiwan nowadays. Moreover, this paper is the first part of my study. The next part of my full study will be empirical study, which applies the evaluation framework to investigate the weakness of the institutional condition of case study and the challenges of participatory planning in practice task in Taiwan.

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