The Process in Strengths-Based Community Environmental Reconstruction

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Abstract. Community environmental reconstruction has long been the administrative aim of the Yunlin County Magistrate. With the encouragement, the movement of the civil participation in the community reconstruction has grown vigorously. The Yunlin County Magistrate started the “Community PK Matches” since 2009, which some tactical operation changes have been done, no more paper plan examinations are issued, on the contrary, community resident-based activities are held. With the “strengths-based” community environmental improvement policy, inner-power of community has been played, in order to promote the quality of the community environment by combining the resources of the local institutes and magistrate. Thus, the idea of the “Community PK Matches” are then brought up which puts the concept of the “Community Planner System” into practice among all the residents in the communities. Under the principles of sticking to the subjects of the matches, the participants brainstorm together to come up with creative ideas, and the results will be evaluated, besides, the participants can observe each other’s ideas during the competitions to sharpen the community network and to promote the autonomy of their own community. This research is going to discuss the procedure of the “strengths-based” community environmental reconstruction through the operation of the “Community PK Matches”.

Introduction

The community development in Taiwan started from the intensive village improvement which boosts agricultural production as well as promotes public health and welfare in the 1960s. Until 2010, the government approved the Rural Rejuvenation Act (Table 1) that implements the concept of cohesion community consensus in order to enhance the quality of life in rural communities. The government responded to the difficulties such as proposed countermeasures to solve the environmental problems. On the environmental changing aspect, residents can now participate in the very beginning of building the infrastructure such as industrial road and drainage. Through this participation, the ecosystem is protected and there is sustainable community assistance.

Compared to the community industry development, promoting environmental reform seems to be easier and the result is obvious, therefore involvement at the beginning of the development also usually starts reforming the environment. At an early period, the government focused on economic development and ignored the importance of the environment. After the economic miracles of Taiwan, the local distinguishing features and styles declined and the view and the quality of living environment did not upgraded
with the economic boost either. This caused difficulties for Taiwan’s community to upgrade it. In order to solve this problem, the Ministry of the Interior pushed forward

Table 1. Community policy integration project over the years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>years</th>
<th>Governance Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Intensive Village Improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Community Development in Taiwan within eight years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Community Development essential points by Executive Yuan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Comprehensive Community Development by Council for Cultural Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>New Hometown Community Building Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Taiwan Six-Star Health Community Project by Executive Yuan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Passed the Rejuvenation Act</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Taiwan townscape improvement movement, which set the Overall Community Planning and Reorganization as its own concept. Through this concept this idea to change the way people treat the environment and care more about their hometown and furthermore create the local distinguishing features and styles. In 2001, officials set up the Community Planner System so as to encouraged space professionals to help and to achieve the proposed community services. Since 2002, Yunlin County began to enforce the Community Planner and Architect System, implement the space and environmental renovation on which emphasize people involvement, giving consideration to ideal and reality, the spirit of sustainable development and flourish the local features [1]. Until 2004, the government cultivated 340 community planners in total. However the professionals that participated were not as conversant as those in Taipei; therefore it was an ineffective plan. Consequently, the officials made the actual executor the new community planner to reform the environment. The officials also held a competition which asked people to use local materials and technical skills to display the beauty of their community. Do It Yourself to build your own environment and to create the local distinguishing features and styles at the same time, hence to promote the community in Yunlin effectively.

This research is aimed to give impetus to community matches while make it operating. As well as to probe into the community autonomy environmental reform issues by the Yunlin County Government. Through competing, this could gather the locals and improve the creativity and social capital network. Compared to the static training in class, dynamic manipulation can not only attract more participants but also let the community features been seen. Dynamic manipulation can also grab attention within six years. Afterwards the atmosphere can spread throughout the whole county and turn it into a social movement. Even though it was a changed plan by the government due to the local condition, it was still indeed a big success. The use of both the empowerment and strengths perspective to explain the difference, implementation modalities and effect of the Community Planner System
The Community Planner System

The core of the system is not the governmental nor the professional, but the local i.e. involving the local community. Without the locals involved, the activity lost the spirit of citizen governance; apart from this, participatory community plan not only provided locals to participate but also a blueprint for locals to imagine the future development of their community [2]. The community is the residents own, neither the governments nor the professionals, it is all their duty and responsibility to reform the place.

In order to respond to the growth of people participate rate in Taipei on 1999, the city government pro-posed two projects; one is focusing on the environmental reform plan and the other is focusing on human concern as to promote the community planner system, hoping to recruitment any planner who has big interested in mapping out the community affairs as well as being the bridge between the community and the government [3]. The plan in Taipei was a big success. The construction and Planning Agency, and the Ministry of the Interior officially established the Community Planner System, which encouraged space professionals to help and to achieve the community services as well as to encourage locals to participate in the townscape improvement movement and community reforming. The community planner selection was focused on the people who have architectural, landscaping, urban planning and other professional background knowledge. Planners are communicators and consultants who help to improve the environment space, provide community consultation and lead locals to participate in.

Since 2002, Yunlin County enforced the Community Planner and Architect System, implementing the space and environmental renovation on which emphasize people involvement, give consideration to ideal and reality, the spirit of sustainable development and flourish the local features (Table 2). Until 2004, the government cultivated 340 community planners in total. However the professionals that participated are not as conversant as those in Taipei; plus Yunlin is an agricultural county, so the plan is ineffective[4]. From 2004 to 2006, the project kept running, but fewer and fewer people participated in it, and to question whether the project of Community Planner System is suitable for an agricultural county like Yunlin. The county needs a suitable measure to deal with the problem.

Table 2. The operation, content and purpose of the Community Planner System from 2002 to 2006 in Yunlin County.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>years</th>
<th>Operation and Content</th>
<th>purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>The Community Planner System on theory and spirit aspect</td>
<td>staff training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Practice the Community Planner guidance program</td>
<td>practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>The Community Planner consultant program especially on training and operation</td>
<td>Autonomous operating training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>The Community Planner cultivation plan on community practice</td>
<td>Demonstration operation</td>
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Source: Chun-I Lee[4]

Yunlin Community PK Matches

To develop the concept of community planners, the theme in 2009 was community beautification i.e. to take the places that people usually go to and change the community planners’ operational method by trying to solve the problems of implementation and to
adjust the definition, training system, the way of proposing and actual executing of community planners. The officials held a competition which asked people to use local materials and technical skills to display the beauty of their community. Do It Your-self to build your own environment and to create the local distinguishing features and styles at the same time hence to promote the community in Yunlin effectively.

In 2003, Huang[3] also pointed out that in the 1990s, community reforms in Taipei had some flaws in which the resources were not equally divided within the community. Most of the communities that were awarded the proposal were the middle class and the famous. Without special policy intervention, the poor or vulnerable communities had difficulty to using the interior and exterior sources to start community reformation. These problems indicated that the plan still had some issues that needed to be fixed. Firstly, in the past the community planner training often focused on observation and learning in class and did not cover any practical application therefore most of the planners did not have a connection with the community. Secondly, those who knew how to write the proposal could have more resources. Consequently the allocation of resources was not equal, which was also another issue.

**Redefinition of the Local Community Planner**

Planners play an administrative and honorable role in the community. The planner selection is focused on the people who have architectural, landscape and urban planning, and other professional background knowledge. They are communicators and consultants who help to improve the environmental space, pro-vide community consultation and encourage the lo-cal people to participate. After the training, they gain four skills. They provide locals with professional advice, they diagnose environmental and reform problems, they handle or participate in relevant conferences and they assist the communities in presenting their application for community reform.

The 340 previously trained community planners only played an administrative and honorable role in the community without connecting with the locals. For that reason the plan was not effective. Consequently, the government redefined local community planners. Those who participated in the community reformation are now called “The Community Planners”, and those involved have been granted an administrative and honorable title.

**Training Method Changes**

In the past, the community planners’ training only concentrated on class discipline, believing that learning more academic knowledge could provide more help to the community. From 2004 to 2006, the project kept running but fewer and fewer people participated. Therefore the question was raised about whether the Community Planner System should carry on. Since 2009, there hasn’t been any classroom learning, only practical lessons. This way, communities can receive the relevant help. Furthermore, the government now provides an open and fair competition for all the communities. The competition has a different theme each year, and locals can reform and design their community in their own way. The government believes that in locals will have the ability to create and to figure out what is best for their own community.

**Simplified the Proposal**

Yunlin is a very grassroots agricultural county where most residents are engaged in agriculture-related work. Therefore, for locals carrying the hoe is not a problem but holding a pen is a burden. As the president of a council in Lun Bue A-Chuan community
said, “I only have an elementary education background and I have no idea how to use computer. I also don’t have good word processing abilities; therefore I tried to use a simple but not fancy form on the proposal. I reduced the time on doing the paper and focused more on the practical side of things, and let more locals participate in their own community reform.”

The Community PK matches

The competition in Yunlin is different from other counties such as changing the classroom learning to practical lessons in order to let more locals to participate in. If any communities have interest in reformation, they could register for the competition. Until 2015 April, the competition had been held six times. Even though the way of competing is slightly different each year, the game is always an open and fair competition for all the communities. The process below is the first competition held in 2009. There were two rounds for the selection. (Figure 1).

Listed below are the different ways to compete. Playing the game openly and fairly will not only give communities the chance to inspect and learn from each other, but to build good relationships as well.

(1) The relationship between public sector and communities: From proposed to cancellation, the communities do not need to go through the complex process.

(2) Autonomous participate: The locals proposed their own plans with the localization ideas.

(3) Creative community and use of talent: Due to the community have to participate all-out, they need to discuss together, create together and solve the problems together and the talents have chance to show their expertise, too.

(4) Honor sharing: Share the honor together in order to arouse sense of social approval.

Through planning and designing which made the locals knew more about their living environment and also gathered the community consciousness. By discussion, people could come up with the ideas which contained local features and culture, then create a diversity community.

Community Empowerment and the Strengths Perspective Using

Due to the community empowerment, the locals have the chance to inspect and learn from others, exchange the internet ability and skills to increase the community development ability. The Community matches in Yunlin, government and the non-governmental organization work together. If the public sector wants to become involved, their advice is according to the local feature and geographical environment, not decide previously. The government makes more people participate actively, and figure out the problems themselves, then use the locals and material resources to localize the community development.

Community Empowerment

The best way to solve the community problem is to gather the locals and combine with every source to deal with the issues so solving the community problems by the locals is a kind of Community empowerment [5]. Recently the community development is always emphasizing on community empowerment. Zimmerman [6] and Rapport [7] think community empowerment is a kind of learning for individual or non-government organization through participating and cooperation in one activity. Through
participating ones could increase the ability of dealing with the problems and make the community a better place. Liao [8] pointed out that community empowerment is aimed to make the locals self-reliance, and make the community a high self-government place and also improve the community economic competitiveness. Lo[9] and Chen[10] said some scholars explained that the concept of empowerment is power shared. The actor can have more decision-making and enable to upgrade the welfare. Wang [11] (47-50) discussed overall community planning and reorganization through two levels which are enable and authorization. He explained community empowerment needs other to cultivate and instill, therefore it is a passive action.

![Flow Chart of community competition.](image1)

Figure 1. Flow Chart of community competition.

![First round of the competition.](image2)

Figure 2. First round of the competition.
A successful community empowerment is accountability which looks for higher and stronger sense of autonomy. Accountability equals responsibility, promising that something is doable. Chang[12](34, 35) defined the community empowerment here means to give and to authorize the power to the locals, in this way they have more options and more spaces to do what they pursued. When the public sector uses result approach method to design the community which means they only set up the theme or goals for them and the community decided what they want to do including strategy using and sources finding etc. Let the community self-government themselves, is a way of community empowerment. Therefore the communities have more chances to bring out abundant sources, such as the traditional skills, community talents helping, own decision making, design the community in their own way and choose the best material etc. Finally will create the community that performs its feature the best. Such a community empowerment can truly express the local emotion and make an active community which is the final goal of a successful community empowerment.

The Role of the Community, Government and Appoint Sector under the Strengths Perspective

The Strengths perspective which mentioned by Charles Rappq was used extensively since 1982. The final goal of strengths perspective is to make good use of the user in their knowledge, talent skills or even the sources. There are three important faiths behind the strengths perspective. Firstly, it mentioned that everyone has their own advantages and potential to develop any possibility. Secondly, people can improved continually if they have the fair chances to get the resource that they need. Thirdly, when it comes to personal growth it is important to be positive [13] (487,489) [14].

The relationship between the public and private sector should aim at using the resource integrally. Finding a way that both can establish, not just one-sided control [15]. As the concept of citizen governance raised, the government to the local policy is changing into the opposite way. However, the best relationship between the government and the locals should be level of cooperation [16]. From organized the locals then improve the community empowerment is the key to achieve the community change.

Liu[17] thinks that everyone participate in the public activity is not the operation of political power or obey the unfair order; it is to follow the fair principle, respect each other, discuss the issue together then reach the same agreement, to achieve and improve the public interest. As the politic is democratization, the economic is liberalization, social consciousness raised and people are not more open-minded. The role of the public sector is changing, from authoritarian regime to assistance. If the community can handle the problem then the government will not involve; if the local can solve the problems then the central will not take charge of it [18]. In decentralized level
partnerships between locals and government to undertake the policy and achieve a better understanding of local government. (Figure 4)

![Diagram](image)

Figure 4. Community PK matches policy.

**Conclusion**

In community competition, the practical lesson simplified proposal which is the most difficult part for the community. Without the complex process of proposal more and more communities are willing to participate in the competition. Due to everybody’s participation, the relationship between communities is stronger. The presentations were made into the videos. As a result of the presentations, the communities have become a better place.

The concept of community empowerment plus the public and private sectors’ strengths perspective, the locals have more initiatives to manage the community without doing the complicated proposal form. All the efforts show on the real action, locals play an administrative and honorable role in the community and show the best to others, therefore arouse the power of the community. In addition, Yunlin is a county that is unsophisticated; therefore if no one starts the activity first, no one would bring it up.

The community matches held by Yunlin government is a big success, the competition not only strengthened the link between the communities but also trained the community planners. Every year there are more than ten communities participating. No complex proposal burden but show the best practical result. It is a game which people observation and learn from each other. The competition combines 6 Cs, including Confidence, Competition, Cooperation, Communication, Creation and Commitment (Fig 5). Confidence means the locals work together to achieve the mission, competition means being awarded under the open and fair competition, cooperation is the foundation between public and private sectors and communities, communication means discuss before every decision were made, creation means the present of the efforts, commitment is the definition of community empowerment. Based on 6 Cs, the locals have more confidence of presenting the communities and also made the communities a new and better place.
References


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