Puducherry Urban Asset Planning Programme

testing a participatory methodology in development studies

IFP
Global Urban Research Centre (GURC - University of Manchester, UK)

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About GURC and the remit of the project ...

- GURC is a multidisciplinary centre focusing on urbanization, poverty, inequality and exclusion.

- *Urban Asset Planning in the Global South*, funded by Ford Foundation

- The principal objective is to carry out pilot research on Asset Planning (AP) in poor communities in southern countries and test the tools and methodology developed
  - Cartagena (Colombia): asset planning for climate change adaptation
  - Puducherry: entry points are: health and the «physical lived environment »* ['local’ conditions: important that local understandings of hazards and risks of the environment / locality can be taken into account] – 7 months
Defining Assets (beyond the tangible)...

As RESOURCES: «The stock of financial, human, natural or social resources that can be acquired, developed, improved and transferred across generations» (Stein 2010, Ford Foundation 2004)

As CAPABILITIES: Assets are not simply resources that people use to build livelihoods. Assets give people the capability to be and act and as well to challenge and change the rules that govern the control, the use and the transformation of resources (Stein 2010; resonance with «capabilities» of A. Sen and others)

Asset Planning (AP): its ambitions...

- Acc. Stein (2010) : Asset planning represents a new form of thinking planning process at the community level and of strategic planning processes in urban development

- Asset planning aims to:
  
  - «Improve poor community’s response and negotiation capacity to address their priority problems and needs »

  - « Generate new opportunities for the poor to strengthen, accumulate, rebuild and adapt their portfolios of assets »

Open to question!
**Background**: AP has been developed inductively from applied studies that focused on the accumulation of the main assets of the poor and poverty reduction policies, adaptation of these assets.

- Emerged from - the 1990s debates on poverty reduction and vulnerability assessment; e.g. Caroline Moser 1999, 2004, 2009 and « Participatory Urban Appraisal » methods;

**Rationale**: AP challenges various existing stereotypes in urban planning and research:

- The measurement of poverty (income, consumption) and the concepts of multi-dimensional vulnerability: the poor have skills to manage a complex « portfolio of assets »
- The fact that assets are not static, but dynamic as the assets are affected by internal and external impacts (e.g., health, violence, extreme weather)
- The practice of planning based on identification of problems and needs for solutions: the poor rely on complex, intergenerational strategies to accumulate, consolidate and maximize the linkages between interdependent assets
The operational framework of AP is as follows:

Asset planning strategies: short and long term

Stages and tools
- Identification of entry points to analyse the strategies of the poor

“Diagnosis”:
- **RIA** (Rapid Institutional Appraisal): to identify the policies and institutions, procedures which address (however effectively) levels of urban poverty

- **Community Profile**: demographic and social data—location, geographic characteristics, a brief history, population size, number of dwellings, ethnic population, predominant household structures; economic activities major income sources, access to credit, land tenure, community infrastructure and facilities such as water, electricity, sanitation, schools, and health posts

- **PAA** (Participatory Asset Appraisal): to diagnose the resources, skills and strategies of community assets and those external institutions that contribute to the accumulation, rebuilding and adaptation of asset portfolios; qualitative data through focus groups
The program includes:

- **APW** (asset planning workshop) for bringing together focus-group participants, stakeholders; in which different strategies are to be identified in order to elaborate an AAP (Asset Action Plan)

- **AAP** (Asset Action Plan): implementation through the community, institutions, partners, etc.

- **Mainstreaming** AP process (strategic and annual operational planning)

- **Monitoring and Evaluation**, including impact assessment
Puducherry project

Main objectives:
- To evaluate and understand Asset Planning through a participatory planning process at the community level (Stein, 2010)

i. to explore local perceptions of well-being/ill-health, especially in relation to the “physical lived environment”;

ii. to explore the matrix of interrelationships between ill-health, local conditions and other assets/resources/capabilities

iii. to seek potential strategies for enhancing the community’s capabilities to address needs within this domain

iv. to assess the effectiveness of this methodology through follow-up monitoring
3. **Training:**

- with the students, facilitators (selected) and faculty about the methodology, tools, objectives and requirements of the project. Organisation of the work and allocation of tasks and responsibilities.

4. **Field survey:**

- On the field with students and facilitators (field workers, «gate-keepers»...)
- Collect general information: about their settlement, composition of the community, socio-economic status of the families, various facilities available (or not) for the community, etc...
- Collect specific information from the infrastructure or institutions in this concerned area (departments, institutions, offices, etc...)
Steps

1. **Select a site with the main criteria**:
   - Accessibility to the site (urban area, « slum ») and the people in the settlement (poor, vulnerable, etc.)
   - Ability to conduct the participatory event on site with communities and the institutions (stakeholders, partners, NGOs, etc.)

2. **Select the participants for the projects**:
   - Students (for the RIA, Field Survey, PAA)
   - Facilitators (field workers, « gatekeepers »: for the PAA and Field Survey)
5. Rapid Institutional Appraisal (RIA):

- Collect data and information on:
  
  - the specificity of the UT (Union Territory) and this site –
    historical background, political environments, relevant
    statistical information
  
  - Institutional-administrative structure (national to local) of
    the governement interventions on health-environment
    issues (schemes, law, organization, etc..)
  
  - Identify the various stakeholders (NGOs, etc.) who
    intervene among/with these communities on health and
    environment issues
6. Participatory Appraisal Assessment (PAA)

- Training for 4-5 days with Alfredo Stein (GURC) with students, facilitators, faculty and IFP
  > to go through in detail the different tools, their application on site,
  the composition of focus groups (formal and informal)
  > the work protocol: the organisation of the work on site
  > discussion of sensitivities to local conceptions and THEIR terminologies, means of expression

- PAA event for 5 days on site; division into subgroups: 1 facilitator and 1 record keeper; 20+/- focus groups to be held over the 5 days

- Assembling and writing up of data each evening of the PAA event; adjustments for the next day

- Analysis, systematisation and presentation of PAA results for the 2 days immediately following the PAA, to prepare for the Asset Planning Workshop (APW)