Urban design with community participatory in revitalizing and improving the beautification of streetscapes in historical towns for sustainable development

Case study: Hang Buom street in Hanoi Ancient Quarter

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I. INTRODUCTION

Urban design is a research and practical field, which considers the main object as "public space" and people as centre for all theories. Urban design is interdisciplinary field with the interaction and combination among all fields to attain the goal about quality improvement of urban spaces. Among disciplines, community is an important factor, which is under influence of spatial change caused by activities of urban design. Moreover, community is one of the beneficiary groups while sharing social responsibilities.

The method of community participatory in urban design is applied popularly in many developed countries that attract significant consideration, especially in conservation and revitalizing physical integrity of historical towns. Since its "*Linking universial and local values*" conference in 2003, UNESCO has promoted the view that heritage protection does not depend alone on top-down by governments or experts but must involve local communities. It is imperative that the values and pratices of local communities, together with traditional management system, are fully understood, respected, encouraged and accommodated in preservation and management plans if heritage resource are to be sustained in the future (*UNESCO, 2004*). In developed countries as Australia, America, Canada or Japan, Singapore,ect...at small or meddium sized urban conservation and refurbishment projects communities often invole in different stages during the whole process: from first stage of condition assessment and analysis, problem defining, solution proposing to final stage of maintaining and managing the project output. It has brought about many positive results, especialy in conservation of historical townscape. However, in Vietnam this method just has been piloted in some projects while neither been applied widerly nor regulated in detail in urban design process at neighborhood or street level. Therefore, it is nessecary to examine and verify the method many times before asserting its preemement and feasibility in Vietnam context in order to get high quality urban design products.

Using integrated, analized and survey methods with local involment in a pilot project "Revitalizing and improving the beautification of streetscape in Hang Buom" of the component "Sustainable development for Hanoi Ancient Quarter" – a biggest pilot project belong to the Program " Comprehensive urban development of Hanoi Capital to 2020 – HAIDEP" sponsored by JICA, this paper will introduce the approach of community participatory, its process and results in revitalizing and improving streetscapes in Hanoi Ancient quarter (AQ). Moreover, this research will focus on the factors that influence on the method's results while verifying the feasibility of this pilot project.Lesson learnt from the research will consolidate method theories and practices to increase the possibility of applicating this method to other similar projects in Vietnam.

II. Introduction on case study "Revitalizing and improving the beautification of streetscape in Hang Buom in Hanoi Ancient Quarter"

Hang Buom street (HB.St) is at once a typical street of Hanoi AQ and having its unique characteristics. HB.st is located on the conservation 1st grade of Hanoi AQ which is the commercial and residential area of old Chinese community in Hanoi.Historically, there are many relics and old religous buildings in the street, especially as Bach Ma temple which is considered as one of "four exorcism" of Thang Long – Hanoi. The street still has many ancient houses with mixture of Chinese architectural style and traditional Vietnamese style. Currently, HB is famous with typical bussiness of confectionary, winery and Chinese cuisine restaurants. According to a block survey conducted in 2005 with 253

households in Hang Buom ward, the historical heritage buildings, ancient houses and traditional architecture of ancient houses and street identity are factors that significant impact on Hang Buom streetscape.

Socially, most of original habitants were Chinese but they were back to their county at the time of 1978. Therefore, the current habitants are most retired pubic servants and people immigrated after 1980s that their knowledgement and relation to the area are not very deep. In terms of urban streetscape, the beautification and street attractiveness are downgraded seriously.Street's facade is chaotic, many ancient houses were replaced by glassed, steelled high rise buildings, historical relics are damaged resulting in the decrease of street identity (*Refered to Table No.1, 2*)

No	House type	Number	Percentage %
1	01 storey	5	4
2	02 stories	58	46.4
3	03 stories	42	33.6
4	More than 03 stories	20	16
5	Total	125	100

Table1. Assessment of house height in Hang Buom street – May, 2006

Year	1999	2003	2006
Number of ancient house	85	65	30

Table 2: Decrease in number of ancient houses in Hang Buom Street in the period of 1999-2006

For these mentioned reasons, Hang Buom has been choosen as an subject for surveying, analyzing and developing visions and strategies for the street as well as piloting some actions to verify the effects of the community participatory method in revitalizing and improving the area's townscape.

Research methodology

The goal of this research is to examnine the urban design project's feasibility. Therefore, it is essential to formulate a system of critearia to assess this feasibility. In principle, the first step is to define fators as barriers for improvement process and verify the impact of the project on these barriers. Within community participortory method, barriers that projects have to face are: a) Quality of resources; b) Financial contribution capacity; and b) Institutional mechanisms for the method. Therefore, the criteria system will help to realize the barriers change and achivement when applying this method.

Defining stakeholders and their roles:

To appraisal the factor of quality resource feasibitily, it is the most important to define clearly stakeholders and their roles in the project's process. Theoretically, in an urban design process at street level in Vietnam major stakeholders are:

- *District government:* to assess and approve projects, to mornitor different stakeholders, provide financial support.
- *Ward/Commune authority:* to take the initiative, direct the project execution, collaborate with stakeholders, provide technical and documentation support.
- *Professionals, researchers (project experts)*: define problems and issues, working with communities, provide technical support for governments and communities
- *(Group of) community:* to invole in whole process of projects, conducting planed actions, contributing human resource and financial resource.
- *Other stakeholders:* enterprises, associations, NGOs, NPOs, community companies...

Due to significant features that Hang Buom street has tangiblely and intangiblely, and street as a subject of the pilot project "Sustainable development for Hanoi Ancient Quarter"it is required to have more stakeholders (apart from mentioned stakeholders above) that involve in the process as:

- *City government*: the street located in a national historical area then it needs the general derection of city Gov to co-ordinate all stakeholders; provide support in terms of human and financial resources as well as legal mechanism.
- *Ancient quarter management Board* (belong to Hoan Kiem district PC): colaborate to ward authority, provide cultural and technical experts, provide documents and guidelines in urban design for community
- *Community group of core members*: individuals from community that are enthusiastic and effecively working, to be a bridge to connect local government, technical experts to local people (leader of resident group, communists, veterans, representatives of women unions, youth union...
- *Sponsors*: International and national organizations to support human and financial resources for urban design.

Formulating criteria for resouce assessment: by using some **qualitative** critearia of standards, awareness, willingness, activeness, ability of taking initiatives, leadership, making decisions ...before and after applying the method; to find out of which fator can be changed or can not be changed within for how long ... of each partner. Therefore, the impact of this method on resource's quality and on the whole results of the project can be realized clearly.

Besides, criteria on financial capacity and legal institutions are also required to foster community involment.

Process of the pilot action "Revitalizing and improving the streetscape of Hang Buom" includes 04 main steps : 1) Assessment of streetscape current situations, 2) Formulating vision and development objectives and strategies, 3) Proposing for long term and short-term action plans follow the objectives, 4) Define some actions which is suitable to the limitation of time and budget amount.

Diagram: Process of urban design with community participartory – Tool - Participation
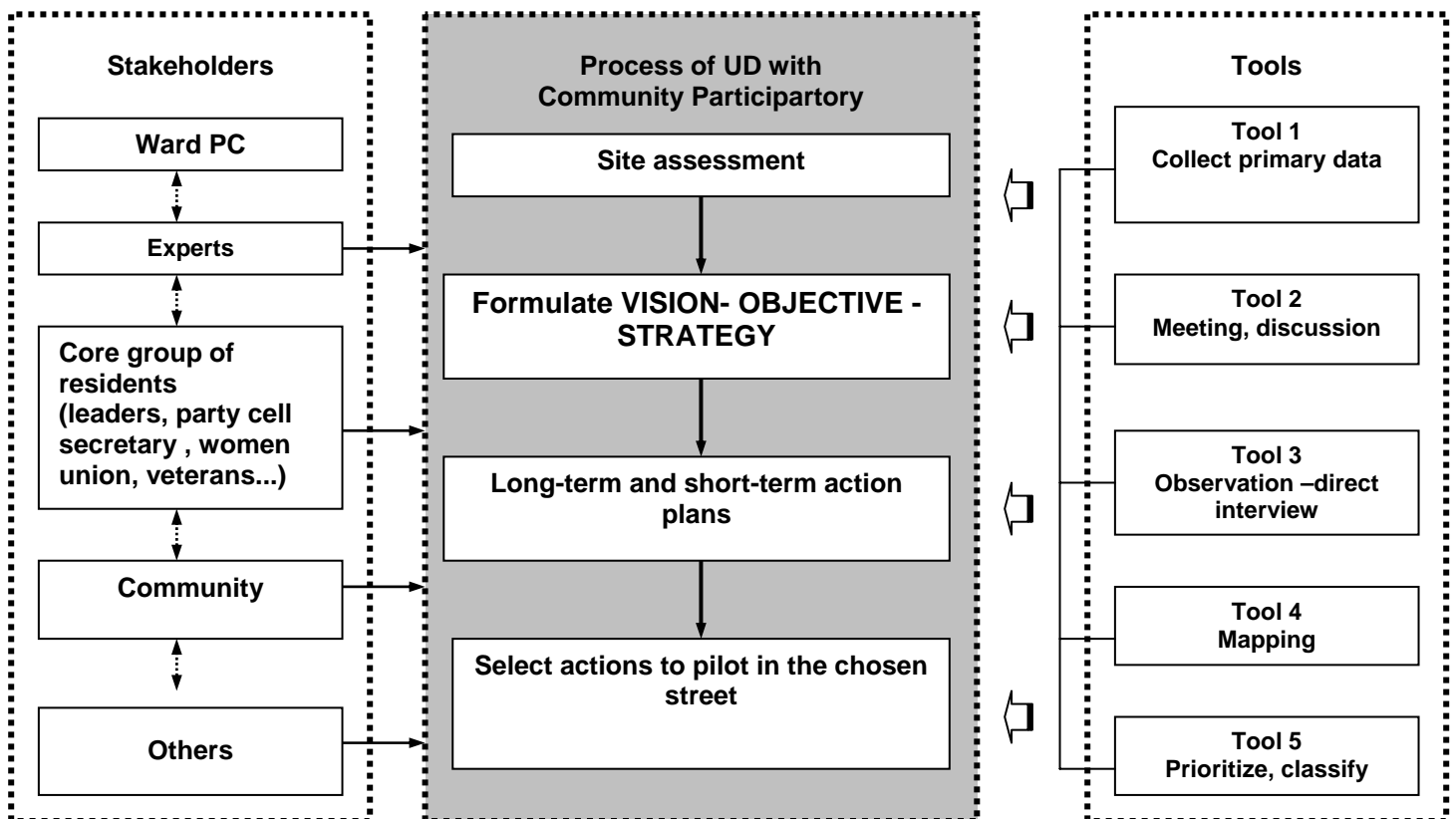
Execution stages

1. Project's team formulated detail plan to guide on site analysis and assessment; defined vision and objectives in order to build appropriate strategies for the street.
2. Meeting with Ward PC to have approvals on project's major goals and asking for support
3. Group making for streetscape assessment: guiding group (03 people) includes 02 project experts and 01 ward's land management officer. Group of core residents (03 people) includes 01 leader of "Tổ", 01 representative of elderly people and 01 person who knows very well about history and community of the area, Group of residents' representative (05 people) includes different types : retired public servants, businessmen, worker, student...
4. Group of core residents and group of residents' representative discussed together and sharing opinions on community participatory method. Organized training course for group of core residents to provide knowledge and skills to participate into the project (2 days full-time)
5. 1st meeting for the whole community in the street to introduce about the project (within ward's broadcast support)
6. Conducted site assessmet: groups were devided into different themes as townscape, transportation, and housing. Each group contains core members, community representatives, experts and Ward's officer.
7. Analysis – Solution finding – Chosing prior actions to pilot : by whole of community, Ward's officer and experts
8. 2nd meeting for whole community: to show assessment results and prioritized actions, plan for financial mobilization.

Tools for community participartory method

Tool 1: Collecting secondary data, all previous assessment related to this streetscape ans documents of local policies related to the themes of townscape and built environment protection.

Tool 2: Meeting – Discussion *(Figure 1)*

It is an integral tool to the method. Meeting content and the way of performing are relevant to the meeting's subjects. In the pilot project, there were 02 types of meeting: Disscussing meeting to get arguements between experts and community core members. General meeting with whole community aims to provide information of implemetation process and collects community's feedback.

Tool 3: Site observation and analysis *(Figure 2)*

Walking around the site, observing and marking problems relating to physical environment. This tool helps community and working groups to define very quick positive and nagative elements of streetscape; provides understanding and sharing among stakeholders that help both parties (consultants and community) to conduct actions together in a convinient and effective way.

Figure 1: Meeting – Discussion

Figure 2 : Site observation and analysis

Tool 4: Interpretative mapping by giving specific information and elements on maps logically *(Figure 3)*

Tool 5: Prioritizing problems and issues, defining suitable solutions to meet the objectives by marking and ranking (considering technical conditions, financial solutions, and legal institutions) *(Figure 4)*

Figure 3: Mapping

Figure 4: Problem ranking

Outcomes:

After a short time collaborative working, the vision for HB.Str was formulated with community agreement as:

Vision:"Hang Buom will be one of the most commercial atractive street of the Ancient Quarter and Hanoi city with a beautification of streetscape that demostrating the unique identity of the street, historically and culturally".

In order to archive this vision, it is necessary to set up long –term and short – term plans with alot of time and energy contribution. However, some actions can perform immediatly within existing resources.

The project's groups decided the 05 most critical problems related to the downgradation of streetscape and urban design elements and proposed at the same time 03 prioritized actions in the scope of time and budget limitation.

Critical porblems	Propose for pilot actions
1. Disordered and chaotic streetscape facade, un-well planed of overhanging and pent-roof system.	1. Installing pent-roof system to improve walking environment and streetscape image
2. Lack of publish rubbish bins on the street	2. Installing public dustbins on the street and provide solid waste collecting equipments
3. Narrow, un-planed occupied street pavements	3. Minimize signboards, ad. Boards which is ugly color and over sized
4. Chaotic and bad images of electric –wire systems.	4. Formulate Urban design guidelines for street development
5. Open drainage gutter systems causing pollution and bad effects to street's attractiveness	

Other actions as re-pavements, refurbishment of damaged ancient houses, underground the open drainage system and electric system, etc... were proposed also in the action plans for street improvement in the future.

Figure 5: Assessment of existing architecture houses on the street

Fugure 6: Assessment of nodes and visual landmark on the street

Pilot action "Installing pent-roof system to improve walking environment and streetscape image" on Hang Buom street

Core member group conducted quick interview residents'opinion about the planed action and financial afordability.In the result is **96% of interviewed people** agree to the pent-roof installation in terms of colors, style, and height factor. Besides, Ward People Community informed each household in the meeting about implementating process and financial contribution. Project's experts, core member group and Ward officers organized a meeting to have community's consensus on the goal and objectives of the action. The future images of street after intervention were demostrated by virtual computer graphic tool and were introduced to all people. It helps the residents to understand the feasiblity of pilot action and willing to participate in. **100% of people** in the meeting agreed to the action of installing pent- roof for unification of streetscape. Financial contribution, time to perform and service provider were discussed openly during the meeting. Result was having community's agreements in terms of pent-roof styles, implementing partner, time and percentage of fiancial contribution of 40%. After that, group of core members was responsible for mobilizing from the community **40% of total expense**, the rest part was sponsored by City Government and other international organization *(Figure 7, 8)*.

Figure 7: Image of Hang Buom St. before installing unified pent-roof system.

Figure 8: Image of Hang Buom St. after installing unified pent-roof system.

After 25 days of installing new unified systems of removable pent-roof on a pilot segment of street from Hang Huong – Hang Buom to Hang Giay - Hang Buom intersection, the streetscape is improved positively in compare to previous time. Community and local Gov. were very satisfied with this result. Officers of Hang Buom Ward were very happy since it is the first time the communy demostrate their high awareness of the beautification of streetscape. It proves that in the future the revitalization and improvement of streetscape is feasible with community contribution financially if having appropriate and effective mobilazation and propaganda.

Formulate future images of Hang Buom street

Figure 10: Image of Hang Buom street in the future designed with community's opinion and comments

III. Assessments on successful rates and feasibility of the project
1. Assessment on major stakeholders' role:
- Ward authority: Theoretically, local authority (Phường) should be the most active stakeholder that involves from very begining of the project and has the role of taking innitiative while supporting and managing actions in the area, connecting community to experts in the field of sharing roles among many stakeholders. However, in practice the local authority is still passive, and is only resposible for solving legal procedures (infoming, inviting, attending meetings) and does not fulfill their role. They are still outsiders. Having in-direct benefits from the project.
-Group of core members: responsible for calling up and mobilizing residents to participate to planed actions. They were trained to have skills in assessing physical values of built environment of the area. They were chairpersons in the meetings and working with community to come with final decisions. They contributed opinions and ideas on urban design field for street improvement. They involved in streetscape improvement actions and connected the community to project experts. Having in-direct benefits from the project.

- Community: Collaborated with experts and core members during streetscape assessment, defined problems , marking and ranking that problems.
Directly involved in streetscape revitalization and improvement actions.
Cotributed money and human sources. Having direct benefits from the project.
- Project (assessing through experts): Took innitiatives in the pilot action (under the steering of city Gov). Directly trained community on skills and tools for assessment. Supported community during improving and refurbishing streetscape (methodologically and technically); disccused and negotiated together with the community for consensusness.

2. Assessment on project feasibility

This is one of the urban design actions with community participatory that was fist piloted in Hanoi city particulary and in Vietnam generally.Through attained results, it is said that the action was successul in terms of taking consideration of community to involve in the whole implementation process and sharing responsiblity financially and human resource(even it was small action)

However, looking at sustainability aspect, the prject has not been realy sustained because of some reasons:

- The project was not started by local authority, it is one component in the HAIDEP program presided over by Hanoi PC and one international consultancy collaborate with local consultants. City Gov, District as well as the Ancient quarter Management Board has not have detail strategies to support AQ's communities on urban design plans for the next steps.
- Time for performing the project "Sustainable development Hanoi AQ" was very short (only 1.5 years) while the pilot actions of streetscape revitalization and improvement was conducted for 02 months. Only 03 actions were piloted among 06 actions proposed by the community. It is from the fact that each conservation and regeneration project in a specific area should be planed and set up implementing strategies by related stakeholders for a period of 10 to 20 years. (examples can be seen in Japan, China, Canada, Australia, etc..). The project results only be examined after long time implementing process.
- Community and core members have not yet participated as roles of initiative for actions that directly affected to them and the area where they are living. The influence spread of core members to other residents in the community was not at high level.
- Project experts was not working or staying in the area. When the project finished, these experts have not got continuing helps in terms of technique for the community

3. Important factors determining the feasibility of community participation method in urban design projects for historical streets

Essential of the method is how to make communiy's benefits to be considered and respected by the whole society, especially in the aspect of improving and preserving physical environment of the area. Community benefits are not only material but also spiritual welfare (maintaining intangible values of the area, increase community's pride on historical area that they are living in...). If the community cannot be aware by themselve, it is needed to inform them about their benefits that must be protected. Therefore, the significant factors that should be strenghen to ensure the feasibility of similar projects or actions:

a. *Community resource*: It is needed to have resources from community as money, human resource, knowledge, skills, leadership, social network etc... Community'resources, especially organizing, managing and planning skills will increase considerably when community can involve in development projects. The more community participation in urban planning and design field, the more benefits will be given to the community.Therefore they will be ready to contribute their sources. It can be said that resource factor has mutual effects to foster the community participation.

b.   ***Community awareness and willingness in participation:*** community's willingness, creative mind and maximum self-control in impproving their built environment is very important. If community has good awareness and knowdlege then the implementation of projects that related to community's benefits will be auspicous. The most critical is how to mazimum the community involment.

c.   ***Responsibility of municipal and local Governments in mobilizing and fostering the community participartory:*** Administrators and leaders should have thoroughful awareness of community participatory and levels of participation. The matter of how and in what level do they expect community to invole (just as informing or asking community to contribute to the whole process...) depends subjectively on the leaders. Leader's consideration and determination is important factor to enhance commnuity involment. Community mobilization is sophiticated that need to address incrementally. Therefore, the leaders should be patient, understanding and have negotiation ability in order to reach to a consensus between Gov and community.

d.   ***Having technical, resources or service supports*** from Gov or other oganizaitons to encourage community's creativeness, self –reliant and helping together among community.

Conclusion: Through pilot action in Hang Buom, the feasibility of the project was examined and verified. The research also proposes recommendation on implementation and management mechanism bases on commnunity participation for urban design project in the field of conservation and improvement the public space at street level. Currently, the state budget for that urban improvement project is very limited, then "State and public partnership" in urban design is the irrevesible way if we realy want to improve our urban quality immediately, especially for historical towns that preservation and projection are always required. The research also provides an integrated, interdisciplinary approach with community participation for urban design in Viet Nam context.

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