

An evaluation of a community based planning approach for settlement development in Sri- Lanka: a case study of a disaster recovery effort in Arugam bay

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Theories and concepts of social sciences have widely facilitated the human settlement development planning. A comprehensive knowledge about the community for whom the planning is meant for is therefore essential to initiate the plan and consequently implement the same. However, the fact that has so often been forgotten in the planning attempts is that the different communities are having different interests and responses to similar kind of issue at-large. Every community is unique by itself therefore, the risk involved in generalizing and applying a social theory to different communities is of very high. Since the access to space is a social right, neglecting the community in the efforts of spatial planning would be the virtual nightmare. Hence, A community based planning approach referred to as Bottom-Up approach has been increasingly recognized as an effective alternative to the traditional orthodox planning practice, which is referred as top-down approach to planning. However, there are arguments as to whether the critiques of orthodox planning could evolve an enforceable alternative that can really be appropriated in the Asian climate or whether they still seek to adopt the borrowed knowledge and practices from the western world.

It is in this backdrop, this research has attempted to evaluate a community based planning approach incorporated in a Tsunami recovery effort in Arugam Bay, a coastal village well-known for tourism, located in the Eastern coast of the country, where multi-ethnic community exist. This planning approach was initiated by a Non-Governmental Organization.

The objective of this research is to further analyze the said argument and find out whether we, in Sri Lanka have our unique approach to planning our human settlements backed the knowledge and experiences of our own community. The findings, at a glance provides a wake-up call for our social theorist, planners and policy makers to revitalize the knowledge about the uniqueness of our own community in relation to the human well being in Sri Lanka.

Key words: Human settlement, Social right, Western world, Orthodox planning, Bottom-up approach.

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