Community Responsive Management

106 Sandalwood Dr.
Gray, LA 70359
985 876 7606
krajeskipeterson@msn.com

Notes for the field
Occasional Papers
On
Resilience to Disaster
Preparedness, Recovery, and Mitigation

"Who are those people anyway?"
and
"What do they think they are doing here?"

BUILDING LOCAL TRUST
FOR
DISASTER
PREPAREDNESS, RECOVERY, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT,
RESILIENCY AND MITIGATION

By
Richard L. Krajeski
and
Kristina J. Peterson
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TYPICAL PLANNING PATTERNS

Agencies go about planning using the following pattern.

1. Planners meet and brainstorm what they think the communities' issues, problems, and perceptions are.
2. Public hearings, surveys, listening sessions, and focus groups are held. People are to come to the 'mike' and say what they think.
3, A list of issues, concerns, and problems is assembled and categorized.
4. The categorized issues and problems are put to the side and the planners go on about THEIR business.
5. Various actions are generated, evaluated, and a proposed action is selected.
6. The issues and problems list is taken from the shelf and analyzed in relationship to the proposed action plan.
7. The planners prepare a paper as to how their plan will 'probably' address the issues and problems.
8. The issues and problems are published in the plan and sent to the public and the official decision-makers.

The individuals in the informal networks - the real issue carriers - were left out to the detriment of the change agency. The trap that many agency planners and decision-makers fall into is the infamous "THEY" syndrome. If agencies and change agents can not put names and faces to the public issues, problems and perception - they will never be able to effectively respond to them and they will be 'ambushed'.

THE WEAKNESS OF TYPICAL PLANNING METHODS

The weaknesses of the usual way of planning are.

1. The planning team assumes that they know the communities and their issues, problems and perceptions.
2. An 'artificial' communication environment is created (public meetings, etc.) where only a small section of any population will attend and even smaller part speak.
3. Identification of issues, perceptions, and problems is an end in themselves - they are not understood as a part of the whole process.
4. The issues, problems, and perceptions are not used in the planning process to create alternatives to proposed actions and are not used as criteria for evaluation.
5. The identity of the issue, problem, perception owners was not identified - thus no valid verification system can be developed to determine if the 'real' issues have been identified nor is their a valid way to monitor the status of the issues, etc.

AN ALTERNATIVE PLANNING PROCESS

Successful programs will:

1. Identify issue owners.

2. Maintain the identity of issue owners throughout the program.
3. Probe the issues for WHO? WHAT? and WHY?
4. Identify the subjects of interest upon which action can be taken.
5. Understand the existing social system by using the seven cultural descriptors.
6. Establish direct communication with the networks.

Networks are not only sources for discovering and monitoring issues, problems, and perceptions - they are also systems for introducing change.[1]

BY KNOWING, CONTACTING, AND USING THE NETWORKS;

- Public attitudes can be monitored.
- Issues can be identified and evaluated.
- Rumors can be dispelled.
- Publics can be informed.
- Opportunities can be discussed.
- More formal activities can be prepared for.
- Less involved people can be involved and have their say.

Social resource mapping and all of the above may seem to have little to do with preparedness, mitigation and building resilient communities, but knowing the community and its natural systems and resources is key to helping the people:

1. Recover from a disaster and build toward resiliency,
 2. Address the pre-existing problem and vulnerabilities,
3. Develop their community and themselves with integrity.
4. Develop individual, family, network, base community organization disaster vulnerability reduction and disaster preparedness capacity building.

THE NATURE OF THE INFORMAL

BEYOND NEEDS ASSESSMENTS - COMMUNITY ASSETS, IDENTITIES, AND CONVICTIONS

IDENITY AND CONVICTIONS

It may seem strange to list identity and conviction as assets. Identities and convictions can be great assets or great liabilities. All communities, organizations, groups, families, households, and networks have some kind of identity and convictions about the nature and meaning of themselves, others, and life in general. They will value and often hold these ideas strongly, usually uncritically, and often unconsciously. These valued identities and convictions give meaning and direction to people's lives and define what is valuable, possible, worth working for, and even worth fighting and dying for. These convictions and identities are powerful forces and can determine directions, attitudes, involvement, commitment, and resistance to any project or program.

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[1] See Rogers above.

OPINION LEADERS AND VALADATORS

In ALL communities there are certain individuals, organizations, and networks that articulate these assets, identities, and convictions and have the attention of the people and decision-makers of their communities. They are the informal communication links. Information and opinion flows (or do not flow) through them. These individuals or networks are called validators or opinion leaders. The identities and convictions and the people and systems that articulate and transmit them can be power allies for or power foes against any program or project.

EARLY IDENTIFICATION

The early identification of "publics", public issues, systems, networks, leaders, groups, assets, identities, and convictions begins with the ability of the change agencies or change agents[2] to describe the existing social system within the geographic area within which they are operating. This is more than demographics.[3]

DEMOGRAPHICS AND MORE

"Demographic data[4] of the populations is useless without the descriptors that tell what makes the community tick. What is important to the people, what do they value, who do they think they are, how do they communicate with one another, what the people are likely to become upset about or committed to regarding the agency's program."[5]

IDENTIFYING INFORMAL GROUPS AND NETWORKS

Some of these groups and informal systems or networks are often most informal and therefore sometimes hard to identify. They will not be in the phone book and there will be no signs on doors. They may be more 'gatherings' of key individuals (called opinion leaders by Rogers[6] and validators by Kent and Taylor[7]) or people with identifiable interest (soccer moms, hunters, builders), than they are 'groups' with officers, by-laws, memberships, etc. They often have a great deal of latitude in what they can do and **they usually have the trust, respect, and the ear of local people and often the ear of the 'establishment'**.

SILENT STAKEHOLDERS

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[2] Change agent means here anyone who is involved in enabling change. Persons like denominational consultants fit the definition of change agent. Development groups and Project Impact organizations fit the definition of change agencies.

[3] See Kent and Taylor and Krajeski *"New Demographics :Mission Development for West Virginia."*.

[4] Demographic data can be understood here as Quantitive research. Descriptors can be understood as Quantitative research.

[5] See Taylor and Kent PRE-CRSIS MANAGEMENT

[6] see Everett Rogers DIFFUSION OF INNOVATION

[7] See James Kent and Donald Taylor PRE-CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Every change agent and change agency that is dedicated to inclusion and justice will **listen for the silent stakeholder.** Women, minorities, the young, old, and disabled are regularly missing or under represented. Community and culture as 'non-quantifiable realities' and the environment must be given voice and a place at the decision-making table. The change agent's task is to find the silent ones and help them find their voice.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FOCUSING ON COMMUNITY[8]

It is important to focus on community during a disaster recovery and in preparedness and mitigation programs[9] because:

1. The community is the carrier of so much of the people's memories, traditions, identities, convictions, hopes, assets, and creative and healing power. In our words – the community is the carrier of the community's and the people's capacity.
2. The community is ultimately the sustainer of dreams, visions, and the life of the people. Only the community can really insure sustainable resilient development.
3. A community focus for locally developed capacity building, response, and vulnerability reduction is more effective and resilient than externally imposed institutional models.
4. There is not enough professional time, funding or personnel for a traditional institutional approach.

5. Sustainable, healthy, and disaster resilient people can only exist in healthy, sustainable, and hazard resilient communities.

When the community is disrupted or introduced to changes that it perceives as disruptive the following may happen:

1. Negative behavioral problems increase (we can not help but wondering if this is what is going on in inter-city areas).
2. Ties that provide important psychological, social, and spiritual support in times of stress and trauma[10] are not available.
3. Active or passive resistance to change rises.

Intervention, educational, and development models based on community are necessary for disaster preparedness, recovery, and vulnerability reduction. This is particularly true when working with a population that is out of the 'main stream'. Any such model will involve the natural and informal caregivers or validators of a community, the symbols of the community, and the "storied" history and hopes of the community. It is important to remember that communities and their people and systems are not monolithic but complex and dynamic realities.

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[8] We believe that terms like community, household, neighborhood, and family are best defined by those who live within them. What is most important from our prospective is that these terms reflect the internal maps of individuals and groups and not the 'objective' maps of governments, scholars, or agencies.
[9] We prefer the term LOCAL CAPACITY BUILDING to preparedness and the term VULNERABILITY REDUCTION to mitigation because we believe they express better the real nature of the problems and possibilities.
[10] Trauma is generally considered as the result of extreme and often prolonged unmitigated stress.

It is also important to remember that communities are not defined from the outside or by political boundaries but by the people who live in them. There can be no successful programming that is based on 'one size fits all.'

CAREGIVERS

Natural caregivers and validators are the trusted folks of a community. They may often be called "Aunt" of "Unc" by the people of the community. They can be elected officials and agency heads but more often they hold no office and represent no agency. Some of these caregivers and validators are also opinion leaders[11] - that is their ideas and opinions are listen to by other and they can shape public opinion.

SYMBOLS OF COMMUNITY

Symbols are fundamental to human existence, human thinking and valuing and human relationships. The symbols and symbol systems of a community can be almost anything - people, events, shopping, leisure, and meeting patterns - almost anything. Often a building, tree, houses of worship, homecoming, the annual block party, front porch and front step 'visiting' will be a symbol of the community for the community. These symbols may be so 'embedded' in the psyche of the individuals and community mentality that they can not be easily articulated. When the symbols are gone, can not accessed, or threatened there may be a sense that the community is gone or in grave danger. When the symbols or systems are saved or replaced there may be a feeling that the community is back or safe. A disaster may create positive new symbols about the community's ability to recover and survive or negative symbols of the community's losses and failures.

COMMUNITY NARRITIVES AND HISTORY

It is a wise caregiver or change agent that picks up on the reality of existing symbols and systems and is aware of the creation of a new symbols and systems. The storied history (or narratives) is the oral history, the informal history, and even the silent history of an area and the people. This history (narratives) contains the values of the people, their struggles, hard times, vulnerability, capacity, failures, and successes over hard times and is often an indicator of their values, assets, and issues.

PARTICIPATORYACTION RESEARCH (PAR)

We propose that the model of PAR is appropriate for developing programs of preparedness and vulnerability reduction among marginalized and vulnerable people. PAR values and celebrates the local community's knowledge and ingenuity. PAR's goal is to enable local people to define research and program agendas by incorporating their criteria and priorities, and using informal, time/cost effective and rigorous techniques.

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[11] See E Rogers

SOCIAL RESOURCE MAPPING

Donald Taylor and James Kent, the developers of **Social Resource Mapping**, say in '*Two-Way Informal Communication With Citizens Pays Off In Disaster*' that shifting away from the "wait and treat" approach to accessing the existing networks and a "search and find" approach and mobilizing the networks to take care of their own people is more productive than traditional "sit and wait" approach. The Taylor/Kent article is written about mental health services and disaster recovery but their ideas apply to disaster preparedness and mitigation.

Pre-Crisis Management was developed to help corporations and agencies introduce major change to a community with as little disruption and cost as possible. It focus has been around issues of the introduction of a new industry or a major shift in land use or living patterns. The process has also been effectively used in local disaster recovery and sustainable development programs and mitigation and preparedness projects.

Much community planning and action tends to work only with the formal institutions and communication systems. These systems are vertical decisions making systems that are short on input from and involvement with citizens.

PUBLIC HEARINGS AND FOCUS GROUPS AND SURVEYS ARE NOT THE SAME AS PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT.

The Taylor\Kent approach is centered on the informal side of citizen communication and decision making. This informal system is horizontal - that is, there are no hierarchies.

INFORMATION NETWORKS

Informal network consists of people who support each other in predictable ways and have a shared commitment to maintain or enhance their quality of life. These networks are usually concerned with cultural values, orientation to friends, neighbors, and relatives. In contrast to formal groups, the structure of a network is horizontal. Their major points of communication are informal gathering places such as cafes, bars, after religious worship, etc.

A formal group refers to a formally organized group of people committed to an activity or purpose. These groups are identified by the vertical structure of their organization and management style.

Both informal and formal organizations and systems are important and neither can be left out of disaster local sustainable capacity building (preparedness), recovery, or vulnerability reduction (mitigation) planning and programming.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION[12]

Basic to this process is the recognition that citizen participation means more than simply being in attendance at a meeting or being included in a survey. Citizen participation needs to include the following elements:

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[12] See the many publications on Participatory Action Research (PAR) particularly Peter Park et al *Voices of Change: Participatory Research in the United States and Canada* and Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury *handbook of Action Research :Participative Inquiry and Practice* and Taylor and Taylor *Just and Lasting Change.*

1. Citizens must be able to understand what the social-cultural implication of the change proposed in their environment actually means.
2. Citizens need to share in deciding what happens.
3. Citizens have to share responsibility for carrying out the necessary actions.
4. Citizens must be able to track the resolutions of   their own issues all the way through the process of planning.[13]

DISCOVERING THE COMMUNITY

The mapping part of Social Resource Mapping part of this process is most helpful in discovering:
1. What communities and networks exist? (In disaster preparedness, recovery, and mitigation the formal structures [government, the ARC, and others] may not know, understand the nature, location, complexity, and extent of some communities. Formal organizations may ignore, be unable to relate to, or discount many informal but real and active networks and publics. Local public officials and agencies are seldom aware of all of the groups, publics, and stakeholders. Sometime some agencies and governments ignore certain parts of their community intentionally.)
2. Who is most vulnerable and who is being left out? (Vulnerability is both objective and subjective and is based on values, and worldviews as well as social and economic status and hazard risk.)
3. The help they need and what local capacities exist and/or need to be built or strengthen?
4. Who are the informal communicators and validators (trusted locals)?

RESOURCE MAPPING SKILLS - The following techniques are integrated in the discovery process:

 1. **DESCRIBING**
Describing is the ability to communicate what you see around you in a way that informs others of your observations without your value judgments and worldview being used to interpret.[14] These observations need to be put into words[15] so that careful reflection can take place.
2. **REFLECTING**
Reflecting is the ability to reflect back to someone what you have observed and refine the description from their response without giving advice or answers based on your experience somewhere else.[16]

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[13] Kent and Taylor PRE-CRISIS MANAGEMENT

[14] Pure objectivity is impossible but high degrees of relative objectivity can be obtained. The discipline of the academic community is very helpful here. Objectivity and neutrality are not the same.

[15] Sometimes the best 'words' are in the 'language' of locally produced maps (see Doug Aberley *Boundaries of Home: Mapping for Local Empowerment)*, local art and drama (see Mienczakowski and Morgan *"Ethnodrama: Constructing Participatory, Experiential and Compelling Action Research through Performance* and Lykes *Creative Arts and Photography in Participatory Action research in Guatemala* in Reason and Bradbury *Handbook of Action Research* .

[16] It is a common error among disaster preparedness, response, and mitigation 'experts' and new comers to think their experience in one place will translate directly to another place.

3. **BEING A STRANGER**

Being a stranger is the ability to observe and interact in a community with a minimum of preconceived ideas and conclusions about that community. This is the most important skill in pre-crisis management and most difficult to accomplish.

4. **LISTENING**

People are willing to talk to others about their communities. The ability to actively listen to others will reveal an abundance of information. An active listener listens with her or his entire nervous system and does not form any response until the listening is finished.[17]

In the discovery process, trainers/change agents help those involved to:

1. Become conscious of changes within the ecosystems and their impact on the systems and themselves. In disaster preparedness, responses, and mitigation, this means being aware of the short and long-term affect on individuals, families, the economy, community, minorities, and the environment – political, economic, cultural, and natural.

2. Use identified skills and informal management networks to communicate and participate in decisions about the impacts of the change before thresholds are reached. In a disaster, capacity building, response, and vulnerability reduction necessitates using the informal communication systems to give and receive information and build the program.

3. Develop mitigation[18] process to deal with negative impacts. In disaster preparedness, recovery, and mitigation this means organizing as much of the community as possible.

THE DISCOVERY PROCESS

The discovery process is a seven-step process.

DESCRIBING THE GEOGRAPHIC AREA - Describing how the human ecosystem is structured and performs.

PUBLICS AND THEIR INTERESTS - A public is a segment of the population or a group of people having common characteristics, interests, or some recognizable demographic features. Publics are "groups" like farmers, neighborhoods, parents, small business people, and minorities. By identifying the publics and characterizing each public's interests, a change agent can determine how segments of a population are affected differently by project or program decision-making.

NETWORKS - A network is a structured arrangement of individuals who support each other in predictable ways because of their commitment to a common purpose, shared activities, beliefs, or similar attitudes. There are two types of networks: those that are informal arrangements of individuals who join together to express their interests, values, or briefs, and those that are formal arrangements of individuals who belong to formalized organizations to represent and communicate their interests. Knowledge of the networks people form to express their interests is essential for identifying public issues relating to projects or programs development and monitoring the effectiveness of decisions.

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[17] Listening with one's whole nervous system involves listening for words, and emotions, and for what is not said. It involves watching the person expressions, body posture and color and muscle change. Much has been written about listening. Some of the best works on listening with the whole nervous system are written by John Blander and Richard Grinder who developed Neuro-Lingustic Programming (NLP). See the bibliography.

[18] Mitigation here does not refer to disaster mitigation.

SETTLEMENT PATTERNS - A settlement pattern is the distribution of a population in a geographic area, including the historical cycles of settlement - how, where, for how long, and who settles in an area.

WORK ROUTINES - Work routines is the way in which people produce their livelihood and make a living, including where and how. This includes skills needed, sources of livelihood, pay and income, opportunities of advancement, business ownership and stability of livelihood and employment. Who works or does not work where, when, and how. Knowledge of work routines is used to evaluate how changes caused by programs will alter the way people make a living.

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES - Supportive service is any arrangement people use for taking care of each other, including the institutions serving a community and the informal caretaking activities of individuals. Examples of informal caretaking activities include the ways people manage on a day-to-day basis using family, neighborhoods, and friendships.

RECREATIONAL PATTERNS - A recreational pattern is the way people spend their **non-work time**[19] and where. How and where do people spend non-work time - this includes places for recreation and the street corners and bars.

GEOGRAPHIC BOUNDARIES[20] - A geographic boundary is any unique physical feature that defines the extent of a population's routine activities. Physical features generally separate the cultural identity and daily activities of a population from those living in other areas. These physical features include natural and human made boundaries - rivers, highways, etc.

 GENERATING THEMES - Themes are broad topics of interest or concern and are the first indication of discernible change in the ecosystem. Themes cannot be directly acted upon, but focus the describer to pursue the identification of issues. Themes are topics like a general dissatisfaction with an agency, government, or the recovery in general.

IDENTIFYING NETWORKS - Networks are the structures that carry the specific issues to be acted upon. Network identification is done in tandem with issue identification.

Networks are of two types - formal and informal.

Kent and Taylor describe the formal networks at the local level as:

A. **FORMAL ORGANIZATIONS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL**

Often people adopt a formal organized structure in order to more visibly display their background, interests, and beliefs, or increase their economic, political, or social influence. While verbal communication remains important and active among members, written communication takes on added importance. The 'credibility of communication remains relatively high, but often written 'evidence' is needed to convince members. Examples are local churches, local clubs, and local professional or occupational organization.

B. **INFORMAL NETWORKS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL**

Most of these networks exist because members share similar backgrounds, interests, or beliefs, reside in relative close proximity, encounter each other frequently, are involved in the same or related type of work, or are members of the same family. Communication is likely to cover a wide spectrum of subjects that are of interest or importance to one or more members.

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[19] The non-work time means just that – time not spent in earning a livelihood. It is important to look at more than planned recreation – games, boating, and picnics. Non-work time includes the retired, the unemployed, street gangs, etc.

[20] Political boundaries may not be important to local informal communities and systems.

The method of communication is, in almost all cases, through personal contact, very informal, and accepted with a great degree of credibility. The informal local networks usually have easily identified gathering places and routine times when they meet. These networks maintain fairly low visibility.

C. **PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE NETWORKS**

We can learn to become effect networkers only to the extent that we are aware of the unwritten 'rules of the game' and how closely we adhere to them. Six principles of effective networking guide networking activities.

Mutual Benefit

Networks will respond to you only to the degree of mutual benefit. You will be taking from the network useable information that you can use in the development of your project or program. In turn the network must be able to take from you information that they can use for their benefit.

Two-Way Communication

You must have a commitment to listen as well as talk. To give information as well as receive information. Being an effective networker means that you must interact, not just plug in and take what you want and unplug yourself.

Development of Others

Being an effective networker involves helping those in the network build information, skills, and strategies that will help them protect and maintain control of their environment even though your input is not directly linked to your program. This is where partnership between the citizens and the agency and agent are built.

Accountability

An effective networker is accountable to the networks as well as to the agency. Your interest in the networks is important to recognize so that you can help meet the needs of the networks.

Stability and Continuity

Networks are dynamic associations that operate on their own agendas and time frames. To be effective a change agent you must learn their rhythms and patterns and insert yourself in them in a comfortable manner. **Networks can not be asked to 'play ball' by the agent or agencies timetable.** This asking the network to play by the agency's timetable is what usually happens in most agencies' public involvement and community relations programming.

Acceptance

An effective networker must learn to accept statements and opinions from the network that may be counter or even derogatory to the agency. This does not mean the change agent must agree. The change agent needs to accept the statement without getting defensive or taking it personally. The change agent needs to remember in those situations that the objective in networking is to mutually learn not to give advice to each other.

ISSUES ARE OWNED BY PEOPLE

It is important to remember that issues are owned by people - people with faces, names, addresses, telephone numbers, networks, sets of values and interests. It is imperative for an agent or agency to identify the owners of issues and to maintain that identity throughout the life of the project.