

Abstract

This interdisciplinary research strives to extend existing knowledge on engineering development processes by researching the interrelation between the success of implementation and stakeholders. The research investigates the opportunities to improve the public's opinion about river management projects in Southeast Asia, by applying public participation measures. The existing literature body discloses the necessity to understand how to organize river development projects in the way, which leads to success and positive outcomes, as well as positive perception of society. There are many techniques how to enhance the urban river quality but rarely do they present the expected result. Such situation requires seeking for a different perspective to the problem. That is why the research about the role of society and people's attitudes about the project and most importantly how it affects the project development is necessary.

In order to capture the human perspective and understanding of the public participation during river development, the qualitative interviews with experts, government officials, community leaders, NGOs representatives, etc. were held. Semi-structured interviews allowed having a freedom to investigate the most important concepts and ideas with the particular person, meanwhile, the core questions are staying the same. In every case studies' country, there were six to fifteen interviews selected. These interviews disclosed the realities of river development in the Southeast Asian cities.

The research disclosed several important issues related to the possibilities to improve public participation, especially during the river development process. The recognition of the vastness of existing and applied definition and concepts is causing confusions, misconceptions, lack of comprehension and possibly even conflicts. It also hinders the development of projects.

Furthermore, the research exposed the existing relation between the success of public participation and the success of river management projects. According to interviewees' opinions and observations, the common comprehension of the concepts is one of the leading features for success in the river development projects. The common understanding significantly improves the communication between experts as well as the information delivery to the society or any other stakeholders. Additionally, several interviewees highlighted the significance of open and encouraging conversation with society, as well as education. Moreover, the literature review as well as the interviews exposed that local communities could contribute immensely to river development. Nonetheless, the existing governmental structure and legal system must be demanding yet supportive for public participation measures and their application during the river development.

The other important outcome of this research is the strong evidence of adaptability of public participation. Local situations are changing because of the diverse processes and

transformations in the society, economics, politics, etc. Such processes must be reflected in the public participation as well. Case study analyses showed that untraditional approaches are employed to organize and proceed public participation measures. It happens before new laws and requirements are settled for such measures. For example, amongst the interviewees, the social media are often regarded as a useful, easily applied and broadly reaching tool to communicate with local communities and society in general.

Last but not least, public participation, as Mekong case study demonstrates, is the multi-layered process. The discussion about this river development happens at different levels and strata. However, some particular organizations seek to mingle all these debates and ideas in order to create one unified development strategy. The diversity of the discussions provides an opportunity to uncover concepts and approaches, as well as solutions for development. However, such decision-making process must contain self-examination and self-correction features.

In short, entire research consists of seven main chapters, which provide the diverse angle to the same research questions. In the introductory part, the existing situation and necessity of this research are argued along with research questions and hypothesis (1 chapter). It leads to the determination of the best-suited methods (2 chapter). In this case, it is case studies and qualitative interviews. Literature review (3 chapter) explores the ideas, concepts and solutions in the existing knowledge body. Here the list of success criteria for public participation process is compiled. Additionally, their application features are outlined. Case study analysis required semi-structured qualitative interviews with local experts, government officials, community leaders, etc. Their opinions were analyzed from the perspective of public participation in the river management. The interviews are examined and debated in the fourth chapter of the manuscript. The interviewees shared their knowledge and personal experiences about measures of public participation, which they implemented and/or were personally engaged in. Although their experiences were versatile, they all acknowledge the crucial importance of public participation in society and its development. However, interviewees displayed different shortcomings and pitfalls of the process. The findings of the literature review (3 chapter) and interview analysis (4 chapter) are compared and exposed in the fifth chapter. The concluding remarks are presented in the sixth chapter, where final outcomes of the research are highlighted. The last seventh chapter is a compilation of the information sources that were cited in this thesis.