

Rights to the City

2021

Ecosystem Dialogue



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Introduction

Rights to the City - Ecosystem Dialogue is an initiative by Think City, in collaboration with NGOhub to utilize the system practice methodology in solving issues that matter to public housing communities. The system practice method allows diverse stakeholders to contribute in mapping the system that exists, recognizing that any prevailing issues are interlinked and only through collaborations that meaningful solutions can be identified. To center the conversation and understand the existing issues, this initiative aims to solve the question: "How can we run programs to help to improve the quality of life for people living in public housing, specifically the people's housing project, known as 'Projek Perumahan Rakyat' (PPR)?"

Why the focus on the quality of life? Quality of life encompasses the overall well-being and life satisfaction of an individual and community. While it is relative, subjective, and consists of intangible components, it is often outlined as one of the more important determinants of lives, livelihood, and sense of belonging to a person and community.

Assessing one's quality of life leads to the realization that many factors contribute to the betterment or derailment of it. Therefore, there are no one-size-fits-all solutions that can be utilized to solve it. Often, different organizations and agencies conduct programs and activities in PPRs according to what is seen as needed by the community and it is delivered based on the organization's or agencies' expertise and area of interest. However, one of the prevailing questions is do these programs contribute directly or indirectly to improving the quality of life for this community?

Hence, to identify the best solution to this problem, we need to first create an understanding of the whole system of quality of life; this includes but is not limited to its causes, its effects, how do its causes link to its effects, how it then generates a loop that keeps going to a negative or positive direction, how we can potentially create programs to stop the negative loops, and many more.

We have conducted a series of workshops with the stakeholders involved to share about systems practice methodology and by using the system practice method, we mapped out the system for this problem, and finally produce a working map for this group of stakeholders involved.

Process of building systems map

Stakeholders involved

In order to build a comprehensive map, the initiative strived to ensure that the stakeholders involved in the workshops are from different initiatives and working fields. We believe that new perspectives may spark during the discussion and process of producing this systems map.

Therefore, 61 participants representing 19 different initiatives (from the government agencies, non-governmental organizations - NGO, social enterprises, corporate agencies and PPR associations) participated in these workshops conducted in August and September 2021. The table below shows the list of organizations involved in this process and the perspectives they represent.

No	Sector	Organization	Perspective
1	Government agency	Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat (JKM)	Welfare: woman, children, old folks, disabled
2	Government agency	Kementerian Perumahan dan Kerajaan Tempatan (KPKT)	Managing housing (public and private) in Malaysia
3	Corporate agency	Taylor's Community	Woman, economic empowerment, education, emotional well being
4	Social enterprise	1024 Humankind PLT	Mental health support
5	Social enterprise	Me.Reka Innovative Education Sdn Bhd	Upward social mobility
6	Social enterprise	Thrive Well	Mental health support
7	NGO	Adab Youth Garage	Youth and teenager
8	NGO	Community Transformation Initiative	Social and community development

Process of building systems map

Stakeholders involved

No	Sector	Organization	Perspective
9	NGO	Persatuan Kebajikan Projek Iqra' SeMalaysia	Education for the underprivileged kids
10	NGO	Pertubuhan Kebajikan TECH Menceria	Women empowerment
11	NGO	Pertubuhan Wanita Berdaya (Women Of Will)	Women empowerment
12	NGO	Sisterhood Alliance	Young girls empowerment
13	NGO	Yayasan Generasi Gemilang	Education
14	NGO	Yayasan Ikram Malaysia	Welfare and education
15	NGO based in PPR	Persatuan Kebajikan Serumpun Murni @ PPR Sungai Bonus	Community welfare
16	NGO based in PPR	Persatuan Perwacan Prihatin @ PPR HICOM	Women and family empowerment
17	PPR association	Kawasan Rukun Tetangga PPR Sg Bonus	Community welfare
18	PPR association	Surau Al-Falah Pangaspuri PPR Hicom	Community welfare
19	PPR association	PPR Kota Damansara	Community welfare

Process of building systems map

Discussion guide

In building the systems map, we adapted the 'Systems Practice Methodology' from the Omidyar Group. To frame the discussion, we used a **guiding star** (which can be roughly considered as vision), a **near star** (considered as missions), and a **framing question** to guide us throughout the discussion in producing the systems map.

Our guiding star - the aspiration or shared vision we have for this system and how it functions - that was agreed during the discussion was, "to contribute to an environment where the residents of PPR housing can thrive and enjoy good quality of life that is comparable to the standard of living with the rest in the country".

Our near stars - which are the 5- to 10-year goal on the way to the guiding star - are:

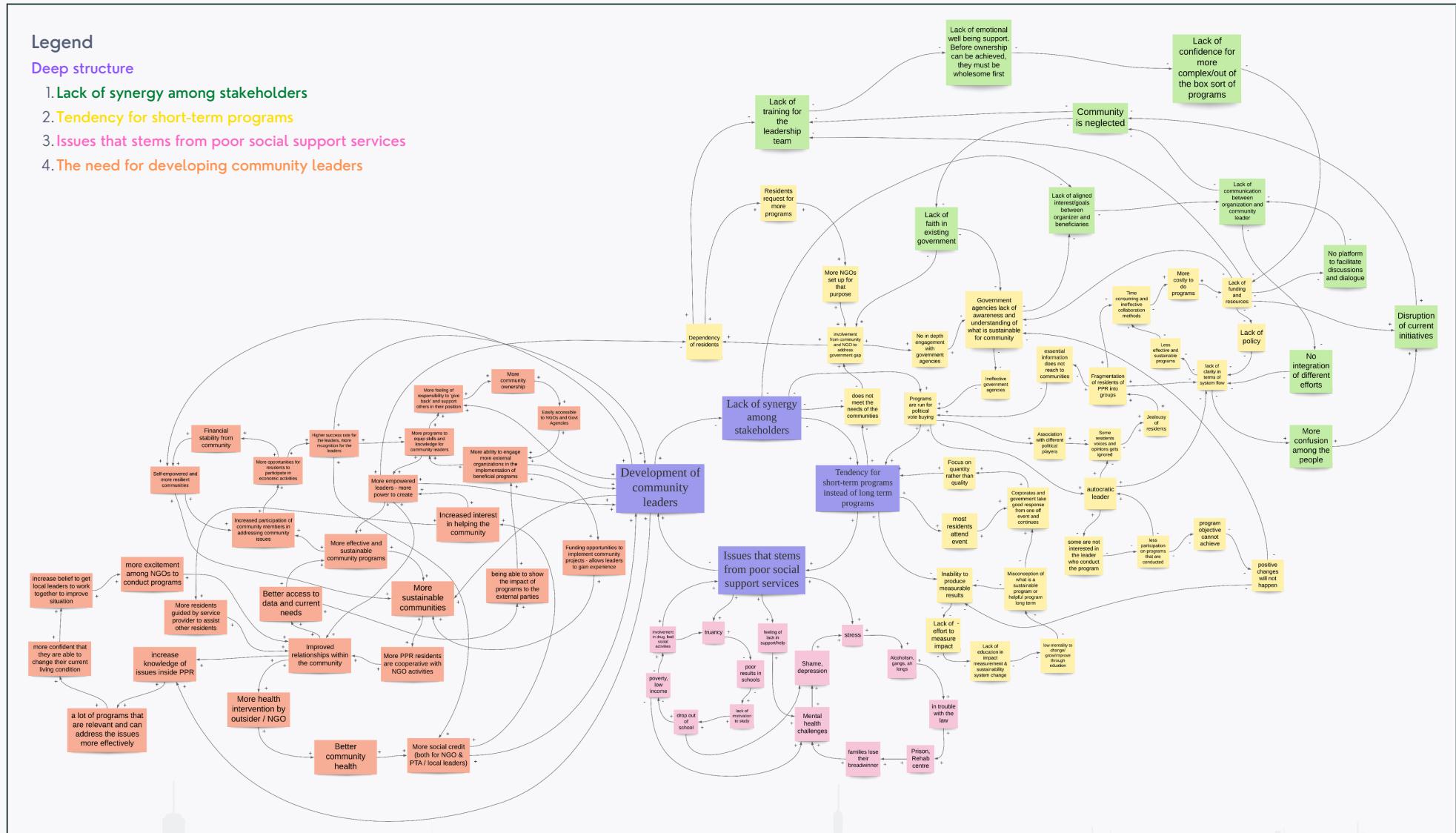
- to construct and organize programs that can effectively improve the quality of life of residents staying in PPR.
- to build sufficient resources and facilities for the usage and comfortability of PPR residents.
- to empower PPR communities to be self-sustainable and self-driven for changes.

We then wanted to gain a deeper understanding of our work context, with the goal of developing a more effective strategies and programs for the PPR community. Hence, aside from just having guiding and near stars, we began to explore the discussion with a framing question:

What accounts for the quality of life for all residents staying in urban area public housing?

Through a series of five workshops with a total of 13 hours spent in building it, we came out with this systems map based on contributions from the above 19 organisations and representatives.

Systems Map of Quality of Life at PPR



Insights from the Map

What it is all about? What do they mean?

Through a series of discussions, we identified the central themes to the factors that impact the quality of life in PPR, what we call the **Deep Structure**. These are four main themes that form the loop and the core story of this systems map, which sits in the center, and is represented in purple notes.

Our core story:

Lack of synergy among stakeholders --> Tendency for short-term programs --> Issues that stems from poor social support services --> The need of developing community leaders --> Synergy among stakeholders

Description:

According to most (reference is from the purple notes in the center of the systems map), lack of synergy among stakeholders is one of the major issues that they have come across when conducting programs in PPR. It refers to the lack of effort between organizers, PPR associations, and even PPR residents to be in sync with what is needed in that community. Due to this gap of understanding, it often leads to a lot of short-term programs (done one-off, or less than one year) or duplicated activities being conducted by internal or external parties to the community staying in PPR. As a result, the programs often do not solve the problems and address the needs of the community, and may only result in more issues that stem from poor social support services.

In order to halt this negative cycle, a lot of participants agreed that the development of community leaders is essential. By creating effective and passionate community leaders, we could build a self-empowered and resilient community within PPR. As you can see from the map, a focus on developing community leaders could bring more synergy among stakeholders. This can reduce the tendency by internal or external parties to conduct short-term or one-off programs without having a more holistic understanding of the needs of the community. This can potentially solve a lot of social issues within the PPR community.

Insights from the Map

Major regions of the Map

There are four major regions of the map, each separated by a different colour.

On the top side of the map, it is largely dominated by the **green** region, which relates to the lack of synergy among stakeholders. It explains how the lack of synergy could negatively affect the communication and collaboration with one another and therefore impacts the community.

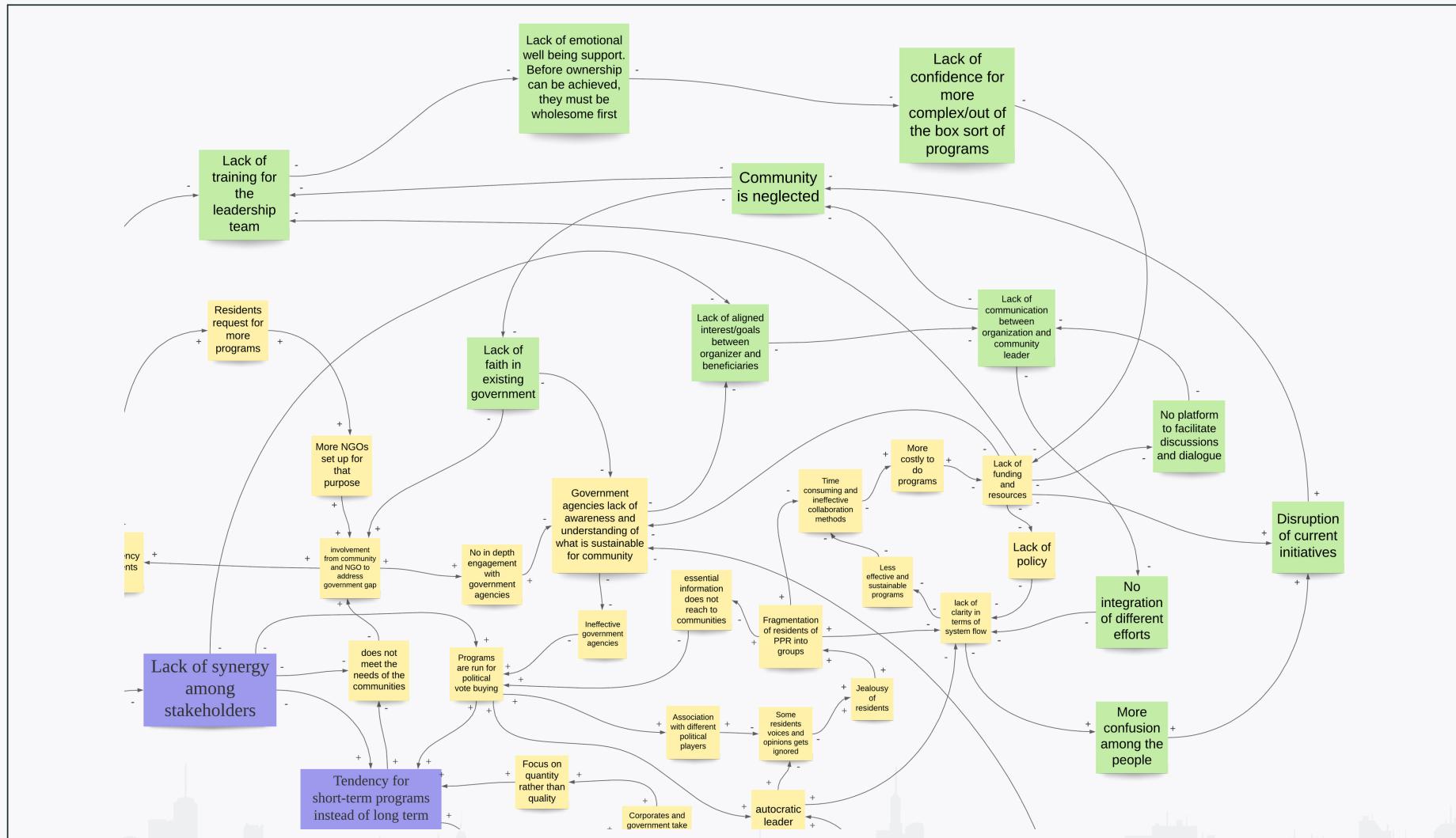
To its right, **yellow** region describes the causes and effects as a result of conducting short-term or one-off programs. It is a mix of positive and negative relationships, as can be seen from the map. It appears that one-off programs can at times benefit some stakeholders while at the same time withholding some.

Near to the bottom side of the map, a **pink** region represents the issues that stem from poor social support services. This describes further the common issues and challenges faced by adults or children who are staying in PPR flats.

On the left side of the map, the **orange** region is largely about the development of community leaders. This, as explained in the previous section, is an important element in stopping this negative cycle.

Insights from the map

1. Lack of synergy among stakeholders (focus on the green region)



Insights from the Map

Lack of synergy among stakeholders

According to our participants, stakeholders here refer to the internal (between associations and committee boards within PPR) and external parties (between funding, implementing organizations, and PPR associations).

Looking at the green region, we would like to highlight this main loop.

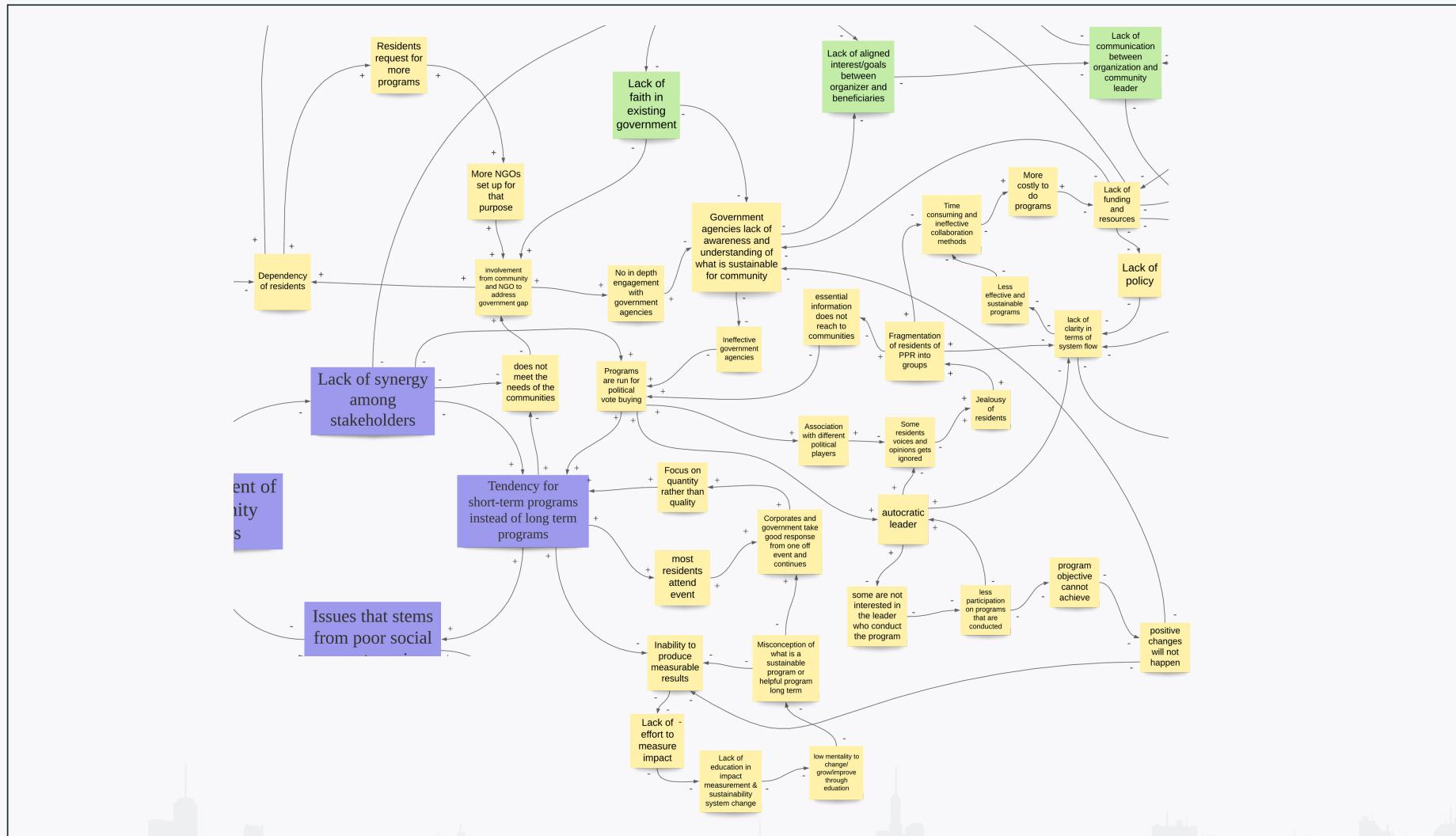
- lack of synergy among stakeholders --> lack of aligned interest and goals between organizers and beneficiaries --> lack of communication between organization and community leader --> no integration of different efforts --> lack of clarity in terms of systems flow --> more confusion among people --> disruption of current initiative --> community is neglected --> lack of faith in existing government --> lack of synergy among stakeholders

It is important to realize that when there is a lack of synergy among stakeholders, each organization or stakeholders involved will proceed to carry out their own set of activities in PPR without thinking in depth about whether it is needed in that community. This can lead to a lot of duplicated and similar programs being conducted by different organizations for the same purpose, but due to lack of communication and understanding among all stakeholders involved, programs organized may not meet the needs of the community. This situation will not only confuse organizations that are conducting programs but also residents who are staying in PPR. Residents may feel neglected and start losing faith in these stakeholders, and this will only bring us back to the original point where there is no need for synergy as the residents could no longer believe in the ability of these stakeholders to help them in improving their situation.

Therefore, most participants believe that it will be very helpful if different stakeholders in the system can collaborate and combine their forces to ensure that the community can obtain the best out of programs conducted. It could save a lot of time and effort for all parties when there is a good system and platform that can help to synergize and integrate these efforts.

Insights from the Map

2. Tendency for short-term programs (focus on the yellow region)



Insights from the Map

Tendency for short-term programs

In the core story, it is identified that a lack of synergy among stakeholders can lead to more tendency to conduct short-term programs.

Represented by the yellow region on the previous page, three loops will be highlighted in this theme.

- tendency for short-term programs --> does not meet the needs of the community --> involvement from community and NGOs to address gap --> no in-depth engagement with government agencies --> government agencies lack awareness and understanding of what is needed by the PPR community --> ineffective government agencies --> programs are run for political vote buying --> tendency for short-term programs

According to most participants, short-term or one-off programs are likely much easier to be conducted and easier to get participation. This often allows essential stakeholders to achieve their goals, grant target, and meet the key performance index (KPI) in their work easily. However, this route could hardly solve the inner issues faced by the PPR community as it might not be specific enough to cater to the needs of the community.

Looking at the issues that are still prominent in PPR, more PPR associations and NGOs might involve in order to address the gap that has not been covered fully by these stakeholders. As a result, certain stakeholders might continue to stay outside of the circle of the PPR community and conduct short-term programs which might not be relevant to the needs of the residents and be labeled as 'ineffective'.

Insights from the map

Tendency for short-term programs

- programs that are run for political vote buying --> association with different political players --> some residents' voices and opinions get ignored --> jealousy of residents --> fragmentation of PPR residents into different groups --> essential information does not reach to the communities --> programs that are run for political vote buying

Within a PPR, there are a lot of associations that are set up to support the facilities and deal with certain communities. Such associations include the main PPR association (Persatuan / Pertubuhan PPR), neighborhood associations (Kawasan Rukun Tetangga), worship associations (Representatives from Surau), and more. Often, these associations serve their target communities, whereby programs run are often serving certain residents only. This results in fragmentation between PPR residents whereby essential information might not reach out to the whole housing community, only those related or involved with the said associations. Furthermore, some associations may even duplicate programs that have been conducted by another association just to achieve their own goals or performance targets.

As relayed by some residents in PPR during this mapping activity, this phenomenon is commonplace for associations working within a PPR. There is a serious internal conflict and very little negotiation effort is done by any party involved to resolve this. Referring to the loop, too much politicking in a PPR can turn into a negative situation because efforts and time are wasted on duplicating each other's efforts to prove one association is worthier compared to the other. When this becomes an unintended priority instead of the intended objective for the target group, it affects even external organizers who may want to conduct programs in PPR.

Insights from the Map

Tendency for short-term programs

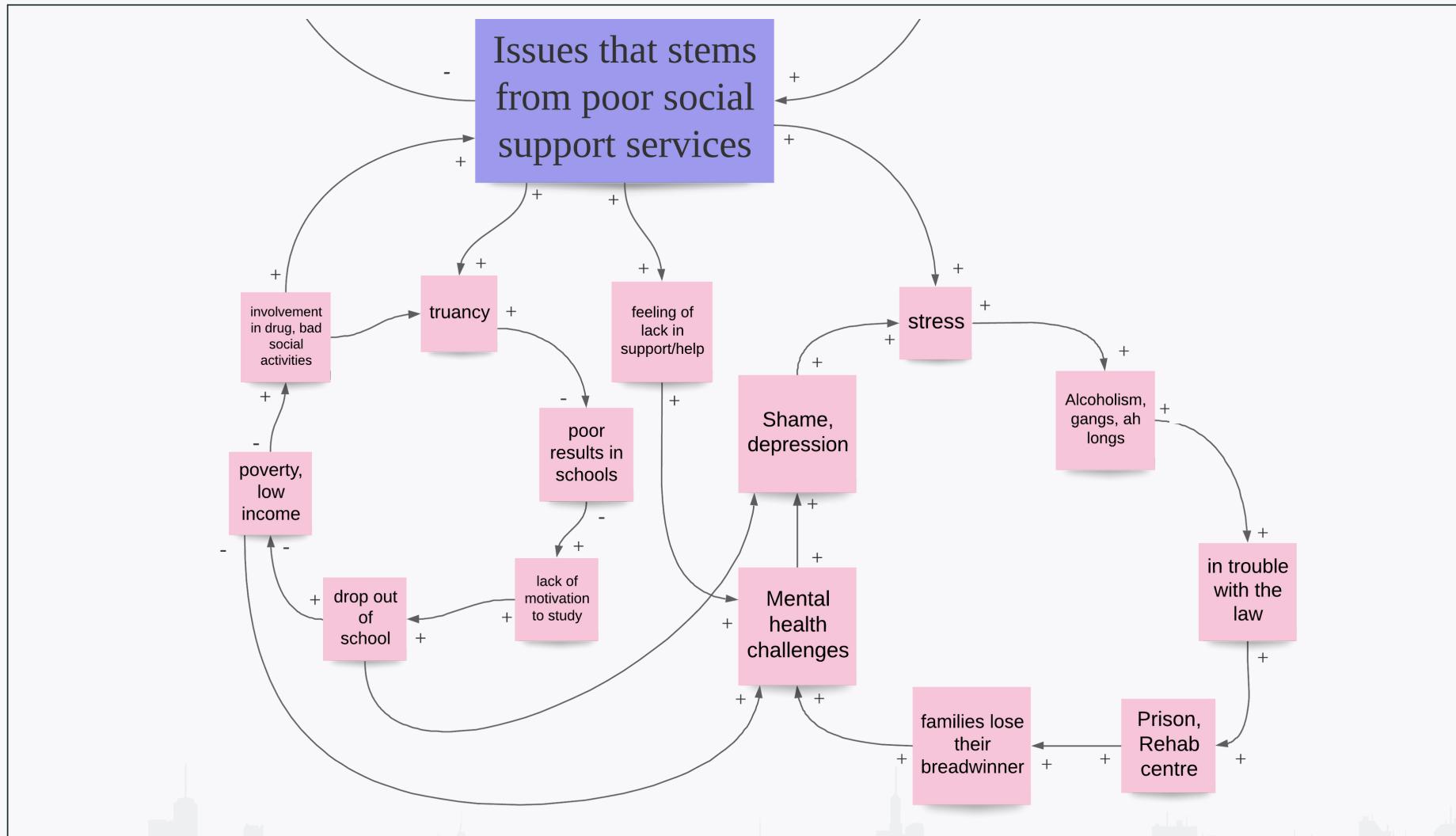
- tendency for short-term programs --> inability to produce measurable results --> lack of effort to measure impact --> lack of education in impact measurement and sustainability system change --> low mentality to change / grow / improve through education --> misconception of sustainable programs --> corporates and government take good response from one-time off event and continues --> focus on quantity rather than quality --> tendency for short-term programs

Moreover, when a program is conducted in short-term or one-off, it is very hard for the organizers to measure the effectiveness and impact created from the program. If the organizers themselves are not equipped with the knowledge for impact measurement and sustainable system change, they might not have the right idea of what is considered to be a sustainable and impactful program. Without understanding and recognizing the purpose of measuring the impact of a program, it may lead to organizers going back into the loop where they will continue to focus on quantity (achieving their goals or KPI) rather than moving towards improving the quality of programs for the benefit of the PPR community.

To conclude, the discussions agreed that short-term programs that do not meet the needs of the community would not be able to highlight the issues that the residents are facing. There should also be a working system that can help the organizers and beneficiaries to identify the purpose of measuring the impact of a program to be able to make the judgment of whether the program could bring positive changes to the overall PPR environment. Furthermore, integrating efforts and perspectives from different parties when designing programs would help in building programs that are relevant, targeted, and meaningful for the PPR community. Overall, this could reduce the tendency to conduct short-term programs and duplicating efforts as a result of the lack of synergy among stakeholders.

Insights from the Map

3. Issues that stems from poor social support services (focus on the pink region)



Insights from the Map

Issues that stems from poor social support services

When programs conducted are short-term and do not help to solve the existing problems inside the community, it will only lead to more issues resulting from poor social support services in PPRs.

Drawing loops from the pink region above, an interesting insight was shared from an organization that usually conducts programs for teenagers aged between 12 to 17 years old. It was shared that despite utilizing different methods or methods successful with different age groups, participation rates from teenagers are very low. When further probed among the group, it was found that many organizations face the same issues, whereby a specific group of people that they want to target – in this case, the teenagers – are difficult to reach. This presents a worrying trend and the possibility of this group being left behind in terms of addressing their needs and concerns.

Perhaps this might be the reason for this loop to occur.

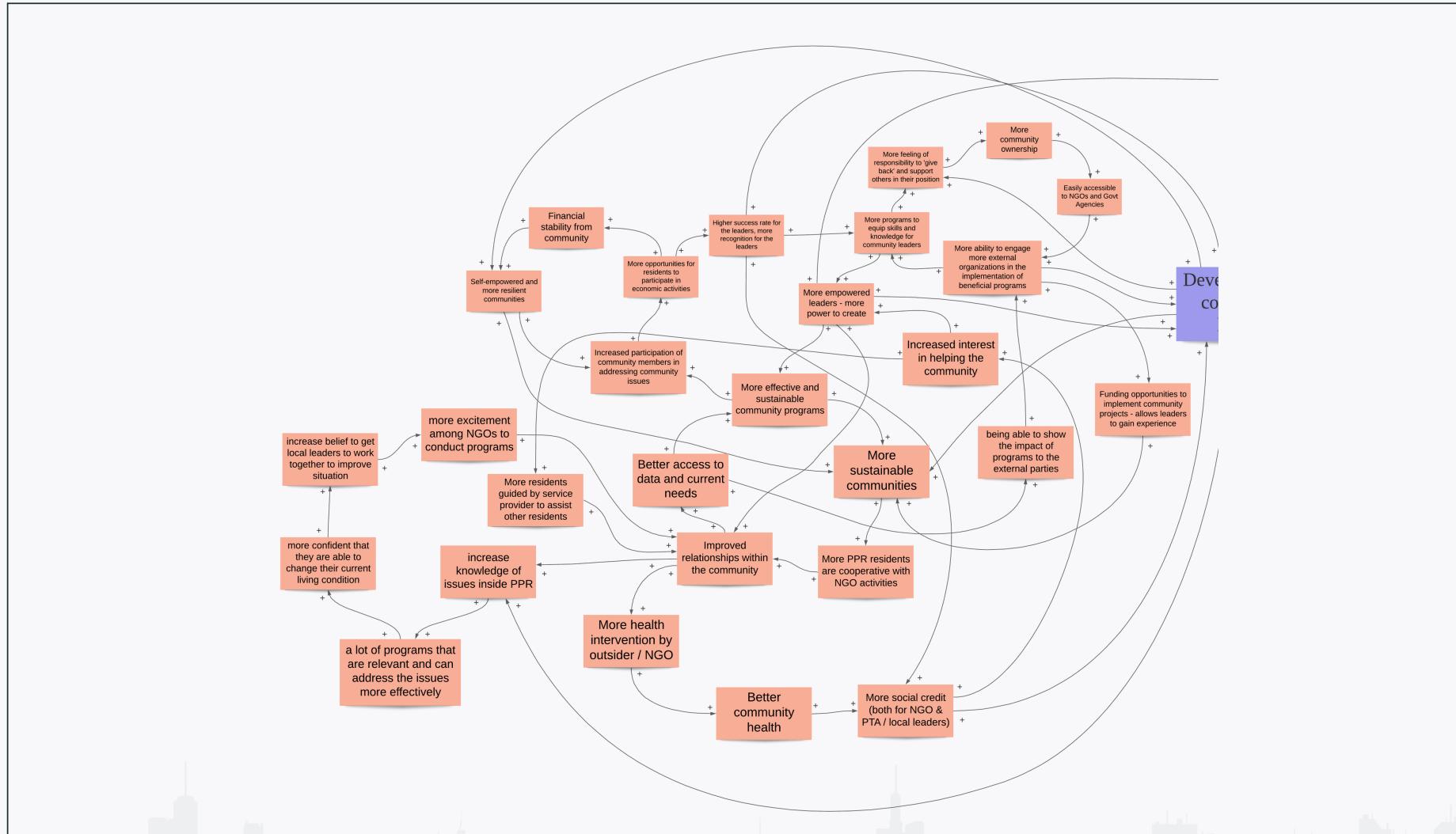
- truancy --> poor results in school --> lack of motivation to study --> drop out of school --> poverty, low income --> involvement in drug and other bad social activities --> truancy

However, within the same loop, it also provides us with an important information whereby the community needs to address to stop this loop from continuing negatively. With increasing truancy that leads to teenagers dropping out from schools, teenagers may be left with nothing to do and could be spending their time and effort in antisocial behaviors, which further marginalizing them from the community.

Therefore, it is important to realize and identify the effects of these issues to ensure it can be resolved holistically with all stakeholders involved in the community.

Insights from the Map

4. The need for community leaders development (focus on the orange region)



Insights from the Map

The need for community leaders development

Based on the core story, development of community leader is an important element to stop the loop from going into a negative cycle.

Highlights of the loops below:

- development of community leaders --> more feeling of responsibility to give back and support others in their position --> more community ownership --> more ability to engage external organizations in the implementation of programs --> more programs to equip skills and knowledge for community leaders --> more feeling of responsibility to give back and support others in their position

The discussions led to the opinion that passionate community leaders often have the feeling and sense of responsibility to give back and support the growth of their community. Having passionate community leaders will also likely ensure that external organizations that come in to conduct and implement programs would align the objectives and focus. Passionate leaders also would be able to understand the purpose of collaborations, act as a platform to sync efforts from different parties and ensure that their community receives the most benefits out of any programs conducted. This will then, in turn, provide proof on the ability of these community leaders, increasing the levels of confidence for other external organizations to further fund or develop programs to create new leaders or equip more skills and knowledge for existing community leaders.

- development of community leaders --> increase knowledge of issues inside PPR --> a lot of programs that are relevant and can address issues more effectively --> residents are more confident that they are able to change their current living condition --> increase belief to get local leaders to work together to improve their situation --> more excitement among NGOs to conduct programs --> improve relationships with the community --> more development of community leaders

Insights from the Map

The need for community leaders development

The goal of a passionate community leader is to serve their community to the best that they can. This means that they need to have strong relationships with their community and understand the issues surrounding the PPR. With this in-depth understanding of the community issues and needs, they can combine forces with different organizations to conduct programs that are relevant, timely, and can address issues within the PPR more effectively. When programs conducted meet or exceed the needs of the community, the residents who attend their program will be more confident that they have the resources to change their current living conditions and believe in the ability of their local community leaders. As programs receive great response from the residents, NGOs or external organizations will then be more excited to conduct more programs in PPRs which can then improve the relationship with the local community. This positive cycle shows that developing good community leader can help in improving relationships among different stakeholders while effectively addressing issues faced by the PPR community.

- more programs to equip skills and knowledge for community leaders --> more empowered leaders (more power to create) --> more effective and sustainable community programs --> increased participation of community members in addressing community issues --> more opportunities for residents to participate in economic activities --> high success rate and more recognition for the leaders --> more programs to equip skills and knowledge for community leaders

As the community leaders become more well-equipped with leadership knowledge and skills, it could then empower the leaders to create more sustainable and effective community programs. When they understand what their community needs best and the importance of certain programs to their community, they can influence a lot of residents to participate in the programs conducted and bring great impact to their community. The loop can then continue towards community leaders bringing a positive change to helping PPR residents, leading to more programs designed to develop community leaders with the PPR by external or internal organizations, as well as creating a critical mass of passionate community leaders.

Conclusion

There are a lot of useful insights that can be drawn from the system's map core story. One of the consistent findings was the issue of leadership. It appears that the development of community leaders can contribute to a better future for the PPR community. When the leaders understand the purpose and rationale of collaboration, it could, directly and indirectly, increase synergy among internal and external organizations that operate within a PPR. This can help level up the impact and benefits that the community will receive from whatever programs or improvements made inside PPR.

At the same time, efforts need to be given to increase the implementation of long-term programs that have the opportunity of creating lasting impact instead of focusing on short-term or one-time off events that do not necessarily address the immediate issues, let alone have a long-lasting impact. What this initiative discover is that more focus is needed to investigate why there is a lack of synergy and the lack of cooperation among stakeholders. Why are there not enough initiatives that exist or opportunities to coordinate and synergize efforts towards ensuring that quality of life at PPRs is improved through programs and activities introduced? Another important area to explore is the poor social support system that exists, and how it relates to the issues that have been highlighted in the creation of this system map.

The process of creating this map alone was a journey that created debate and discussion - What does the quality of life mean? Who is the target community at PPRs? What are the roles of internal and external organizations in the programs conducted? Who is responsible for the quality of life at PPR? These are interesting and powerful questions that no one organization or sector can answer because the whole exercise of creating a system map is understanding that interrelated issues are caused and effect of various stakeholders and only through understanding that partnerships, resources, and commitment of multi-actor parties and stakeholders can help alleviate and resolve some of the persistent issues.

Conclusion

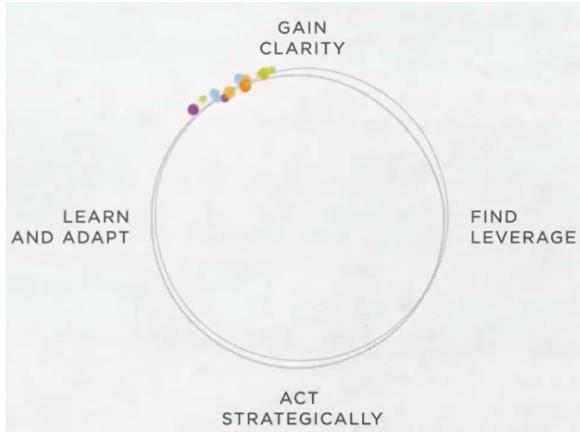
It is important to note that quality of life as depicted in this map is a constantly evolving system. Systems map is just one of the many available methods that we can use to analyze and understand the whole system in a more effective way. Therefore, we need to acknowledge and appreciate the limitations of any methods introduced to provide a holistic understanding of the approach and output derived. There are three limitations identified in utilizing the system map approach:

- Insights and ideas on the systems map are highly dependent on individuals and groups providing the input. Therefore, the output is limited to the perspectives and understanding of those involved in building the map together. As new perspectives and insights are added, the map is likely to change and evolve.
- The system map is time-sensitive. Therefore, considering that the issues mapped are usually dynamic and ever-changing, the system map should be seen as a snapshot of the current understanding of the ever-evolving system.
- The system map is not a fixed conclusion on understanding the issue. Instead, it should be treated as a tool to gain an understanding of the broader system and can be changed, adjusted, and corrected based on new understanding and new perspectives.

This initiative acknowledges that organizations involved in this system may look at the issues from a completely different perspective. This initiative is a start to recognize the different issues that affect the quality of life at PPRs based on the sharing, insights, and experiences of the participants.

If you would like to provide feedback and views on this Systems Map, please get in touch with Think City at k2k.publichousing@thinkcity.com.my with the Subject: Ecosystem Dialogue - System Map.

We look forward to your thoughts!



About Rights to the City

18 months
January 2021 – June 2022

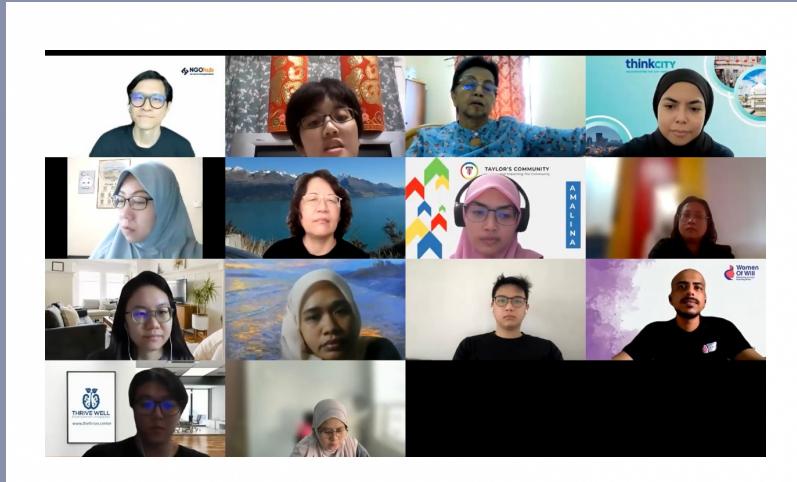
Research & Analysis of Public Housing
 Ecosystem Dialogue
 Roundtables & Symposium
 Site-specific Pilot Projects

Systems change that leads to **resilient** and **empowered** community

Collective Impact Methodology

The Five Conditions of Collective Success

1. Common Agenda
2. Shared Measurement System
3. Mutually Reinforcing Activities
4. Continuous Communication
5. Backbone Support Organisation



Finding Inclusive Community Solutions

"The right to the city is not merely a right of access to what already exists, but a **right to change** it after our heart's desire"

David Harvey - Economic Geographer

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