

Inter-Local Governmental Collaboration for Urban Planning: A case of Kathmandu Valley

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Abstract

Nepal is a young federal country with a federation, 7 provincial and 753 local level governments. Each local government has been given exclusive rights closely related to urban planning and development. Even though there are various issues that needs to collaborated with neighboring local governments (LGs) and act as and integrated planning, there is no provision of horizontal collaboration. The works of LGs has been seen as more inward looking rather than a whole spatial approach. This research tries to find answers on what are the current roles of LGs in urban planning with study of existing framework, how they are collaborating in sectors of urban planning like disaster risk management, transportation planning and solid waste management, focused in Kathmandu valley and what keeps them from collaborating effectively than they are doing now. The result are validated by the three data points; Literature review on governance, collaboration, review of plans, programs and budget of local government after 2017 of research area and search collaboration between them; Questionnaire survey to municipality officials regarding the framing of work of municipalities, level of communication, defined roles and process of decision making in the sectors of urban planning, in a Likert scale of 1-5 and plotting in a circular diagram to visualize collaboration; and key informant interview on finding answers of research questions. Even though the necessity of horizontal collaboration seemed to be realized, it is found that there is no binding legislation or standard framework of collaboration between LGs. There is more of privileged and intermediate type of collaboration. Also, disaster and solid waste management had more collaborative approach than transportation planning. Various factors that ignites collaboration and keeps collaboration from happening is studied through literature and reflected in research area as well.

Keywords

Local government, Horizontal Collaboration, Integrating framework, Urban Planning, Kathmandu Valley

1. Introduction

Federal structure of governance with three level of governments has been enshrined in the Constitution of Nepal 2015, providing exclusive and concurrent rights to each level. Schedule 8 has provided exclusive rights related to urban planning resulting in changing the way development plans are carried out in local level [1]. Individual municipalities being small units in terms of population, area and resources have their own limitation of development they aspire to have, to meet their targets cohering with the national goals [2]. In young federal democracies as Nepal [3] collaboration among local actors has been a crucial variable in regional development [4] in order to overcome the issues relating to inefficiency, non-sustainability and short sightedness of plans [5].

Collaboration in urban planning is more crucial in case of large metropolitan and surrounding [6] like Kathmandu Valley and Surrounding. Collaboration is characterized by shared goals, high degree of negotiation, interactivity, interdependence [7] intentional, collective approach to address public issues through building shared knowledge [8]. Negotiation between local government can be taken as cooperative game theory-based approach [9] providing platform for collective concern [10]. Spatial planning is taken as a most crucial sector local government need collaboration on [4] urged by the high interconnection and interdependence of the way of life in urban areas like Kathmandu Valley. Collaboration depends on factors such as overlapping of mission, shared values, contribution to overall strategies [8], history of conflict and alliances, balance

of power, level of communication and trust [10] and incentives it gives to the actors [11]. It is likely to happen if the net gain to group is more than the gain to each actor and has consensus of public as well [12]. Large groups such as Municipal Association of Nepal are considered as latent groups, while average action taking group is considered to be with 6.5 members [12]. Large municipalities like KMC can afford the risks and costs that collaborations entail [13] which gives smaller municipalities a privileged type of collaboration [12]. Actors of same level, shared economic interest, availability of standard procedure, reciprocity, attitude of executive and autonomy on deciding to collaborate [14], and political linkages [15] encourages collaboration. Decentralization of Nepal started with division into regions, districts and zones. Local self-governance act, 1999 had provision of central officials involving in local plans and development. Constitution of Nepal 2015 has enshrined cooperative federalism, autonomy and collaboration in its directive principle and state policies. Local Government Operation Act 2017 (LGOA), has provided jurisdiction such as tax, public service, local roads, development plan closely related to urban planning and given hint of horizontal collaboration on sectors such as disaster management, transportation, solid waste management, entrepreneurship, tourism, but not made it obligatory. There is also provision of Coordination and Inter-relation Act 2020, Natural Resources and Fiscal Commission for vertical collaboration with legal status. Horizontal collaboration is practiced to some extent through Municipal Association of Nepal (MUAN). Valley Municipal Forum has been formed concentrating on 18 municipalities of Kathmandu Valley but lack legal status and guarantee of continuation after next local election.

2. Research Questions

This research is about collaboration among the Local Governments in Nepal in the context of urban planning.

1. What type of collaboration currently exist between local governments in urban planning?
2. What keeps them from collaborating more effectively than they are doing now?

Existing Framework on collaboration, detail study on collaboration among the local governments on the

sector of transportation planning, disaster risk management and solid waste management and analysis of collaboration among LGs in reference to literature is done.

3. Methodology

The research follows pragmatic paradigm and inductive logic as a methodology. Firstly, literature on collaboration, governance and governance is done along with review of program, policies of local governments of research area after the introduction of LGOA to find areas and projects where collaboration is taking place.

Table 1: Five levels of collaboration and their

	Five levels of collaboration and their characteristics				
	Networking 1	Cooperation 2	Coordination 3	Coalition 4	Collaboration 5
	Aware of the organization	Provide information to each other	Share information and resources	shared ideas and resources	Members belong to one system
	Loosely defined roles	Somewhat defined roles	Defined roles		
	Little communication	Formal Communication	Formal Communication	Frequent and prioritized communication	Frequent communication is characterized by mutual trust
Relationship characteristics	All decision are made independently	All decision are made independently	Some shared decision making	All member have vote in decision making	Consensus is reached on all decisions

characteristics-Frey, Lohmeier, Lee, Tollefson, 2006 The second data point is obtained through questionnaire survey regarding collaboration among local government with purposive sampling of municipalities officers. There are various ways of measuring collaboration by [16, 17]. Five level of collaboration is taken as the basis of measuring collaboration between LGs under the criteria of framing of municipalities on working together, level of defined role, communication and process of decision making on SWM, DRM and transportation Planning. The third data point is taken from the key informant interviews comprising of planners, academicians, practitioners and elected officials.

4. Study area

Kathmandu Valley consists 18 local governments of urban character. Eight local government are chosen on the basis of various stages of development. Kathmandu Metropolitan City (Old Metro city), Lalitpur Metropolitan City (New Metro City), Madhyapur Thimi (old municipality) Budhanilkantha, Tokha, Tarkeswor, Mahalaxmi and Nagarjun (newly formed municipalities in 2014) are taken. The basis of choosing the research area is also the extent of urban

growth with the help of google images in different time period and immigration rate from CBS data.



Figure 1: Research Area

5. Data, Discussion and Analysis

5.1 Collaboration between and among LGs and agencies on urban planning in Research area

There are different agencies that are involved in some ways on sectors of urban planning in the research area. District Coordination Committee (DCC) is responsible for dissemination of information from the federal agencies and ministries to the LGs and coordinate report of LGs to the federal level. It also helps in coordination of training, joint programs of federal level to local level. Kathmandu Valley Development Authority (KVDA), an important stakeholder in urban planning of the valley has considered leading role of local municipalities in sectors such as transportation, land use, urban growth solid waste management and disaster risk management [18] in its master-plan. There is also a provision of Physical Development committee in KVDA, a board comprising both Provincial and local government for carrying out urban planning and implementation.

After the review of annual plans and programs of local governments, it is found that there has been collaboration in solid waste management sector in leadership of largest LG, ie; KMC. Also, a joint program on feasibility study, planning and building waste holding center is in process between Budhanilkantha and Tokha Municipality located in the border of these two LGs. There is seen collaboration in disaster risk management among all the

municipalities, especially in firefighting and immediate disaster under leadership of KMC and LMC. Other municipalities such as Tokha, Madhyapur Thimi have given their firefighting vehicles to KMC for operation and maintenance due to lack of skilled human resources and capacity. Collaboration in transportation sector is seen less. Tokha-Tarkeswor- Budhanilkantha Municipality have cross-border joint project of road. Some municipalities is seen to have some level of collaboration in maintenance of corridor roads, bridge construction that connects both of the municipal borders. There is also collaboration of LGs with other agencies such Federal and provincial government, international and private organizations apart from LGs.

5.2 Collaboration between and among LGs in urban planning, through questionnaire survey

A questionnaire survey was carried out with the municipal technical officials of each of 8 local governments, regarding the level of collaboration with other municipalities of research area. The framework of questionnaire was based on the method of measuring collaboration chosen above, with the Likert scale from 1-5 on the sector of transportation planning, solid waste management and disaster risk management regarding framing of working together, level of communication, presence of defined roles and process of decision making.

5.2.1 Collaboration in Transportation Planning

LG		KM	LM	TO	TA	BU	MH	MT	NM
KM	Framework for working together								
	Defined roles								
	Communication								
	Process of decision making								
LMC	Framework for working together								
	Defined roles								
	Communication								
	Process of decision making								
Tokha	Framework for working together								
	Defined roles								
	Communication								
	Process of decision making								
Budhanilkantha	Framework for working together								
	Defined roles								
	Communication								
	Process of decision making								
Tarkeswor	Framework for working together								
	Defined roles								
	Communication								
	Process of decision making								
Mahalaxmi	Framework for working together								
	Defined roles								
	Communication								
	Process of decision making								
Madhyapur Thimi	Framework for working together								
	Defined roles								
	Communication								
	Process of decision making								
Nagarjun	Framework for working together								
	Defined roles								
	Communication								
	Process of decision making								

Figure 2: Collaboration in Transportation Planning among LGs

The figure shows the collaboration of each LGs with other in terms of framework of working together, defined roles, level of communication and process of decision making with the scale from 1-5. It shows that KMC has certain level of Collaboration with all local government as it shares the border with all of them. But the collaboration with other LGs is not seen to be significant. Tokha, Tarkeswor and Budhanilkantha are seen to be collaborating in terms of transportation planning, as they have joint cross border road project. There can be two factors for less collaboration in transportation planning. Firstly, roads above 8m are under the jurisdiction of federal government and not LGs. Secondly, municipalities tend to be limited within the boundaries and geographical connection only urges collaboration in this case.

5.2.2 Collaboration in Solid Waste Management

LG		KM	LM	TO	TA	BU	MH	MT	NM
KM	Framework for working together								
	Defined roles								
	Communication								
	Process of decision making								
LMC	Framework for working together								
	Defined roles								
	Communication								
	Process of decision making								
Tokha	Framework for working together								
	Defined roles								
	Communication								
	Process of decision making								
Budhanilkantha	Framework for working together								
	Defined roles								
	Communication								
	Process of decision making								
Tarkeswor	Framework for working together								
	Defined roles								
	Communication								
	Process of decision making								
Mahalaxmi	Framework for working together								
	Defined roles								
	Communication								
	Process of decision making								
Madhyapur Thimi	Framework for working together								
	Defined roles								
	Communication								
	Process of decision making								
Nagarjun	Framework for working together								
	Defined roles								
	Communication								
	Process of decision making								

Figure 3: Collaboration in Solid Waste Management among LGs

Similarly, from the questionnaire survey, information on collaboration of one LGs with others in terms of framework of working together, presence of defined roles, level of communication and process of decision making in solid waste management with the municipal officials of each municipality of research area was found. It is seen that there is significant level of collaboration between the local government in solid waste management than transportation planning. The SWM is coordinated with the help of existing working framework of KMC, LMC and Madhyapur Thimi. Each local government has their vehicles or coordinate with private organization for collection of solid waste and all waste are transported to the Sisdole landfill site. The new proposed site of Bancharedada

is also collectively agreed upon by all municipalities. The good initiatives such as production of bio mas and recycling by Madhyapur Thimi can be area which can be collectively agreed upon.

5.2.3 Collaboration in Disaster Risk Management

LG		KM	LM	TO	TA	BU	MH	MT	NM
KM	Framework for working together								
	Defined roles								
	Communication								
	Process of decision making								
LMC	Framework for working together								
	Defined roles								
	Communication								
	Process of decision making								
Tokha	Framework for working together								
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Madhyapur Thimi	Framework for working together								
	Defined roles								
	Communication								
	Process of decision making								
Nagarjun	Framework for working together								
	Defined roles								
	Communication								
	Process of decision making								

Figure 4: Collaboration in Disaster Risk Management among LGs

In the same manner, questionnaires was asked to the municipal officials regarding collaboration in disaster risk management with other municipalities of research area. The above figure shows that there is a higher degree of collaboration in disaster risk management among local government of Kathmandu Valley. The largest local government, KMC and LMC seems to have collaboration with all the local government. The collaboration is seen to be present beyond the boundaries of municipality, different from what is seen in collaboration in transportation sector. This may be due to the complex issues needing immediate and collective response, which complements the findings of [19] suggesting higher degree of collaboration in emergency management.

5.3 Reason behind no collaboration

Questionnaire was asked to municipality officials as a opinion on what keeps governments from collaborating. Most of the respondent said that lack of integrating framework for collaboration was the reason that keeps LGs of research area from collaborating. Also geographical distance between government and leaders with different political ideologies are taken as significant factor for no collaboration.

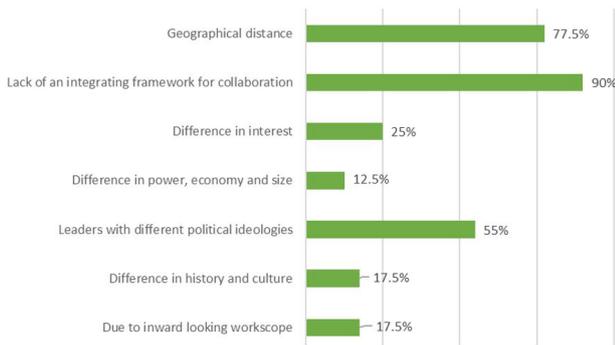


Figure 5: Reason behind no collaboration

5.4 When collaboration takes place

Municipal officials of each LGs of research area were asked about when collaboration takes places between local government. Majority of the respondents said that availability of standard framework and procedure encourages collaboration, followed by geographical closeness, shared interest and leaders with similar political ideologies as factors that makes collaboration happen.

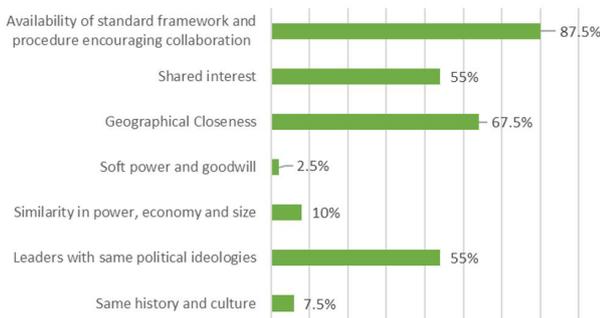


Figure 6: When collaboration takes place

6. Findings

Collaboration in urban planning is crucial in order to maintain coherence, avoid duplication and promote integrated development. There is various reason why collaboration takes place and why it doesn't. KMC being largest in terms of development and capacity and sharing boundaries with other LGs, has been involved in providing financial, technical assistance to other LGs. There is not equal participation, but rather privileged and intermediate nature of collaboration between LGs in the valley. Some level of collaboration is seen in transportation planning in areas such as maintenance of corridor, bridge construction that falls on border of both municipalities. As federal government is also involved

in road with larger width, such as ring roads, road more than 8m, the scope of individual municipalities is limited to smaller roads thus mostly having inward looking scope. Solid waste management as being a common challenge and having certain collaboration between LMC, KMC and Madhyapur Thimi way before the introduction of federalism, has made other new municipalities to join them and thus has a integrating framework for collaboration along with individual roles in their respective jurisdiction as well. As the literature shows, LGs seems to have good collaboration regarding disaster risk management. LMC, KMC with their higher capacity have leading and collaborative role in firefighting, providing covid assistance to hospitals in other municipalities, while areas such as river training, corridor maintenance, and natural calamities have participation and collaboration of municipalities in closer proximity with each other. The level of collaboration is seen quite more in DRM. The essence and necessity of horizontal collaboration between local government seems to have been realized by the municipalities of Kathmandu Valley, through the formation of Valley Municipality Forum. But it is not effective due to lack of legal status, lack of institutionalization and approach of leadership residing in individuals rather than in system itself. Plans and projects are mostly formed with the vision of mayors, which have possibility of limiting only within their tenure.

7. Conclusion

Concept of inter-local governmental (horizontal) collaboration is important and crucial for Kathmandu valley as well as among local government of other regions in federal Nepal. An integrating framework is needed that provides the legal basis as well as strengthen the system through the approach of leadership in a system rather than on individuals. Development of guidelines for joint problems solving and tools for consensus building is needed. Bottom up planning in collaboration between local government can lead to coherence of local plans and resolve collective issues.

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