

Transect Walk

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Brief Description

- A **transect walk** is a systematic **walk** along a defined path (**transect**) across the community/project area together with the local people to explore the water and sanitation conditions by observing, asking, listening, looking and producing a **transect** diagram

Brief Description contd.

- Transect is a walk or series of walks with the project team and some members of the community through the village and allows them to see the range of features, resources and conditions across the area.
- Transects, generally, come after the drawing of maps and they are used to verify information gathered from maps.

Brief Description.....

contd.

- The walk rarely follows a straight line, but often zigzags through different areas. The process of transect walk if well conducted provides a wide range of information as they move around their village and homes.

When to use transect walk

- The transect is a tool to help us learn more details about the environmental, economic and social resources in a community. A transect is a sort of one-dimensional map of a line cut through a village.
- It depicts a cross-section of an area along which a number of issues are recorded.
- The purpose of a transect is to organise and refine spatial information and to summarise local conditions in the area. The information is gathered from direct observation while walking a straight line through the community.

When to use transect walk..

Contd.

- Transect walks are often used in the methods of “Total Sanitation”, which involves a walk to make people aware of the hygienic consequences of their sanitation habits. If you follow the link in the caption, you can see a great series of pictures detailing the process.
- However, there are some ethical concerns, because this method can shame people a lot. At the same time, it is a great way of getting the perspectives of women and children as well.

When to use transect walk..

Contd.

- Overall, transect walks are a simple, flexible and very participatory method than can be used as part of a bundle of measures in community planning.
- They are often a good entry point when starting a project in a neighbourhood, keeping in mind that they only show a limited snapshot of local realities.

Benefits

- Outsiders equally get a chance to familiarize themselves with the diversity of eco-systems, land use patterns, socio-economic indicators, cropping patterns, slopes, drainage patterns, etc in the village and the problems and opportunities associated with them.



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Philippines: Interviewing the director of the waste pickers association by Global Environment Facility via flickr, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Challenges

- Despite its simplicity, the method holds some problems. As in so many participatory processes, it might be challenging to find representatives from all parts of a community.
- Depending on the time of the day, the season and events like school holidays, the transect walk only shows a very specific time and situation.
- From experience, ethical issues like how to guarantee the safety of participants can arise.

Challenges ... Contd.

- Community members want external experts to have a good impression of their neighbourhood and might hide some of its uglier sides. There can be a bias in interviews of neighbours. Another method-related criticism is the lack of exchange between different groups.
- It would be interesting to let several groups do the same transect walk and compare their experience.

Challenges ... Contd.

- Additionally, a transect walk requires time, willingness and motivation. Therefore, it is not adequate for the solution of pressing problems.
- At the same time, the challenge is to sustain the initial dynamics and maybe even euphoria generated by the transect walk. How can continuity be assured?

Procedures

- Here, it is important to use community mapping before and after the walk and draw conclusions from the maps.
- The results must be made accessible to the community. However, there is still not enough experience on how to properly interpret these maps and other data from the transect walk and translate them into action.

Procedures... Contd.

- Considering participatory urban design, transect walks don't necessarily help in finding design suggestions. Walking observations with a local guide or "shadowing" the locals might be more illuminative, but not very participatory.

Procedures... Contd.

- The walks must be complemented by other methods like problem-prioritising and translation into action plans.
- The cooperation of the local municipality must be secured in order to implement results from the transect walk and subsequent mapping.
- One of the next articles in this series will be about mapping, so stay tuned!

Important tips

- Explain to the community that a better understanding of their local reality has emerged and that you would like to share more of their knowledge and ideas.
- Ask the people to take you on a walk through their village in order for you to see some of the features depicted on their maps such as land-use patterns, the distribution of resources, etc. Allow as many questions as possible and re-assure the people that the exercise has no hidden agenda.

Important tips..... contd.

- Define a route from your sketch map, from north to south, east to west or high lands to low lands, showing the line of greatest diversity;
- Choose a logical starting point (boundary, highest,...) in consultation with the community;
- Assign responsibilities for observations, listening and note-taking to team members;

Important tips..... contd.

- Ask people to accompany you on the walk. Try to choose guides who have lived in the area for a long time, their knowledge will be invaluable. Make sure to include women. Without them, you will miss many features and explanations.
- Choice of topics to be covered will depend on the characteristics of the community and the objectives of the project and should be agreed upon by the team beforehand.

Important tips..... contd.

- Be on the lookout for such socio-economic indicators as pit-latrines, type of houses, productivity levels, etc and any problems and opportunities related to them, etc.
- Talk to people whom you meet on the way that are living/working in different parts of the village to collect their own perceptions of the village.

Important tips..... contd.

- The additional information concerns such issues as the use and management of soil, access and availability of water and firewood, veld-products, grazing, etc.
- A large and highly variable community may require more than one transect. Construct a chart, to present the information gathered.

Case study

- In the Gambia, transects were produced on separate walks with young men, old men, young women and old women so that priorities by both gender and age could be understood.
- The transects give attention to soil types, land use, interventions and problems.

- Differences in the transects reflect gender-based differences in activities and access to resources. For example, the women's transect emphasises the rice fields because rice production is traditionally the responsibility of women, for both food and income.

Questions?

Many thanks for your audience

