



Paris, April 18 and 19, 2014

WORKSHOP NOTES & SAMPLE TAKE-AWAYS

Workshop 1 Discussion Summary: “What is the responsibility/potential of government as a structure for the ‘public interest’?”

- Urban contexts are more complex environments for PID. Interventions with multi-faceted issues to address.
- Urban contexts have the potential to impact more people. This may mean a different and more strategic approach is needed.
- Government is losing political ambition (just like architects) with more emphasis on the bottom line and economic indicators less on social development vision and indicators.
- The internet helps us reach a public scale, creating a dialogue between projects and designers, showing a way of working or what is possible to others including architecture students, and those outside of design professions.
- Perhaps the communication should optimize this outreach by balancing description of social, economic and other aspects of the projects and not only the design story.
- Is it “community interest design” or “public interest design?”
- How do we reach a public scale?
- How do we engage with government for scale, accountability, sustainability?
- As architects we used to be more concerned with public and social interests per se and less conditional that the emphasis be on design. Now ‘design’ appears to be our main incentive or interest in PID.
- Designing communication processes are as important as designing built interventions (Walk Raleigh). Matt’s engagement with Gov’t ensured mainstreaming, scale and durability out of a private initiative.

Workshop 2 Discussion Summary: “How to engage the community?”

- Exchange of learning/knowledge. It's a give/take.
- Leave knowledge and gain knowledge also.
- Community engagement is an evolutionary process
- Help define what form system it takes.
- Why are we here doing Public Interest Design? What are the goals? Partnerships and engagements.
- Trust, transparency and awareness of culture.
- Community engagement can be a mirror for the community
- Community engagement identifies what assets are and you can add value.
- Community engagement is the care of public interest.
- Community engagement can have different purposes.
- Community engagement is a way of thinking.

Workshop 3 Discussion: “What is a healthy community?”

- Community determined - economics, exercise, utilities, safety.
- PID - Help them prioritize
- Not same as normative 'health' by medical profession.
- Normative health vs. healthy behaviors - behavior change.
- See a balance: vibrancy or change in the context of traditions.

Workshop 4 Discussion: “How PID can relate to vernacular?” “What does beauty mean to a community?”

- What is Beauty? Is it esthetic? Or is it successful project?
- Are we designing something beautiful to the community of designers in London or to the community we are working for? If for the local community, then it's vernacular.
- Is beauty the process or the result of the process/solution?
- Its beautiful if it can be appropriated or added value personally
- Beauty is about bringing the local and the external together. Permitting Hybridity.
- Beauty is the enabler platform to exchange and meet.
- Beauty is within the vernacular, the role of the designer is to reveal it.
- Only the community can say if it is beautiful or not?
- But Beauty has to be recognizable by a broader community? Other participants?
- In PID beauty is in the simple solutions, it's obvious, self-explanatory

Workshop 5 Discussion: “What are incentives models to Public Interest Design?”

- Precursor to the design process to test assumptions.
- It is an interactive process based on rapid prototyping - fail early, fail cheaply.
- Just because someone said they want it, does not mean the idea will live long.
- Revisit priorities and incentives.

Sample take-aways of attendees:

- Take a big problem and make it into small problems that you can change yourself.
- Do you work with big institutions vs. accessible tools – choosing between two scalable models?
- Community becomes stakeholders as you progress along a path
- How do you maintain an activist or critical practice? How do you grow this – from within the profession or outside of it?
- Think carefully about how you ask the questions –the way you contextualize the question is how you will find the answer.
- The question is not what is the cost of architecture, but what is the cost of not having architecture.