



Reflection on Practice: Integration of Participatory Design and Community Development in Alternative Architectural Education: Case Studies from England and Thailand

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Abstract

The wealthy classes have always been consumers of the art of architecture since the Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Greek epochs. Conventional architectural practice and education has long been limited to serving a minority of the world's population. To engage architects in the design of people's houses has often been seen as unnecessary or extravagant. This paper sets to present the gap between conventional architectural education and the majority of the population in Thailand, focusing on low-income housing and community development. Moreover, it presents challenges of alternative architectural education which integrated community development into its architectural programme, with case studies from England and Thailand. The author employed participatory observation as a method of this paper, in order to reflect on the practice of the case studies of alternative architectural education.

The paper divides into 4 parts – 1.) introduction, 2.) low-income housing, community development and architectural education, 3.) reflection: alternative architectural education, and 4.) conclusion and recommendations. The case studies are an architectural summer workshop organized by Architecture Sans Frontieres (ASF) – UK, B.Arch in the International Development Studio: Shelter and Settlement after Disaster at School of Built Environment, Oxford Brookes University, M.Sc in Urban Intervention Studio: Shelter and Settlement after Disaster, Building and Urban Design in Development at Development Planning Unit, University College London and an architectural workshop “*Sweet Dreams Community? Workshop*”, in collaboration with Art4D Magazine, funded by Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, Ministry Of Culture.

Keywords : architectural education / participatory design / community architecture
community participation





Introduction

The wealthy classes have always been consumers of the art of architecture since the Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Greek epochs (Salama, 1986, Kostof, 1977). Conventional architectural practice and education has long been limited to serving a minority of the world's population. To engage architects in the design of people's houses has often been seen as unnecessary or extravagant. Only about 10% of the population has the resources to commission the kind of buildings the 'academically trained architect' has learned to design – and only 10% of them would think of engaging architects (the others would appoint civil engineers or contractors directly). Therefore, architects merely interface with the built environment in society for about 1% of the population (Correa, 1997). In Thailand, the history of modern architectural practice and education can be dated back many decades ago. After the Thai polity had transformed from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy in 1932, a formal architectural curriculum was created leading to the establishment of the first architectural school at Chulalongkorn University in 1933. The Association of Siamese Architects under Royal Patronage (ASA) was founded in the following year. The second architectural school of Thailand was founded at Silpakorn University in 1955 with a focus, in that time, on traditional Thai architecture. Nowadays, there are nearly 30 architectural schools in Thailand. Unsurprisingly most architectural schools aim to produce architects to serve the 10%, as architectural design and building process can hardly be started without clients who have budget to support. This paper sets to present the gap between conventional architectural education and the majority of the population in Thailand, focusing on low-income housing and community development. Moreover, it presents challenges of alternative architectural education which integrated community development into its architectural programme, with case studies from England and Thailand.

The author employed participatory observation as a method of this paper, in order to reflect on the practice of the case studies of alternative architectural education. The author was working as a teaching assistant of design studios and a coordinator of the alternative architectural workshop used as the case studies.





Low-income Housing, Community Development and Architectural Education

Prior to the 1940s, it could be said that there was no housing problem in Thailand as the population was quite small, even in Bangkok. During World War II, the Government established a Public Welfare Housing Unit, under the Department of Public Welfare attached to the Ministry of the Interior, to focus on housing estates in rural areas. After World War II, the lack of adequate housing became more evident because most houses were damaged and destroyed during the war and many people migrated to Bangkok in the hope of earning a higher income. The rapid population growth of Bangkok was magnified during the post-war period. The role of architects and architectural schools in responding to the housing needs of the urban poor in the 1950s was minimal, as the architectural profession was newly established and still in the nascent stages of development.

During 1960s to mid 1970s, the first Thailand National Economic and Social Development Plan (1961-1966) aimed to transform Thailand from an agricultural country to an industrial country. The modernization process required an immense amount of cheap labour for the commercial and service sectors in cities. Bangkok was the centre of Thailand's economy, financial system, health-care services, education, politics and administration. The first four slums of Thailand – *Prem Pracha*, *Wat Lard Bua Kao*, *Soi Namthip* and *Maggasan Bridge* – emerged and expanded rapidly in Bangkok in the 1960s. The housing supply provided by the state and private sectors in Bangkok could not meet the housing demands of the rapidly increasing urban population in the city. In 1960, there were an estimated 740,000 people living in overcrowded communities in Bangkok (Askew, 2002). Around 1960, the Government of Thailand set up the Central Office for Slums Improvement (Senanuch, 2007), which was originally identified as the Slum Clearance Office (Chiu, 1985), attached to the Bangkok Municipality now the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA). The first eviction took place in 1963 to clear slums in front of the Department of Highways in order to build government offices. Slum eviction was a part of the second Thailand National Economic and Social Development Plan (1967-1971). This phase marked the beginning of slum evictions and the construction of many subsidized concrete social flats. The government established the NHA in 1973 in order to respond to the housing demands of the poor and lower-to-middle income groups.





Focussing on architectural education, regardless of the confrontation of the growth of slums and the establishment of the NHA, mainstream architectural practice and education in this phase remained irrelevant to the urban poor housing problems until the mid-1970s. After the violent democratic movement on 14 October 1973 in Thailand, people's awareness and concern for the poor increased and their willingness to learn from the poor increased. This is discussed below.

During mid 1970s to the 1980s, The urban poor housing policy in this phase faced a complex dilemma due to the financial inability of the Government to maintain its role as a 'provider' in solving the slum problem, By 1978 the NHA abandoned its reliance on the subsidized housing division because of a lack of government funding, and slum upgrading and sites-and-services were incorporated into NHA's Accelerated Plan for 1979-1982. In parallel, from 1978, NHA proposed hire-purchase housing schemes for middle-income-earners, especially civil servants, and conducted resettlement and flat building projects for the poor. *"The NHA's forced abandonment of the high-subsidy approach to low-income housing... did reflect the state's capitulation to the forces of the urban land market..."* (Askew, 2002: 66). However, the efficiency of the NHA was low, constructing only approximately 6,000 low-cost housing units per year. At the same time, after the early 1980s when Thailand was hard hit by the oil crisis, the economic growth was incredibly improved in 1986. Therefore, the government decided to decrease financial support for the NHA and shifted support to the private sector to build houses for low-income and middle-class groups. At the same time, NGOs promoted the extended concept of people-centred community development and people participation. 'Development' now meant organizing people who wanted to gain more power to effect change on their own through a learning process that made people think, plan and work together in order to solve problems from all aspects of their life. The social developer was merely a 'catalyst' and an 'organizer.' A slum dweller was an actor, not a victim (Rabibhadana et al., 1982: 147-148).

Focusing on architectural education, There was a dilemma within the phase because although the social awareness of architects was promoted, the economic development of Thailand was booming. There were many commercial projects constructed by the private sector. At the same time, there were more vernacular materials employed in building design. Post-modern architecture was introduced and criticised that it focused mainly on pluralistic 'styles.' Many architects stated that post-modern architecture in Thailand in the period 1977 – 1986 (BE 2520s) was





not different from modern architecture because both were not concerned with the context of Thailand, of the Thai user, or of human behaviour in general. A minimal style was merely being replaced by a complex style (Horayangkura, 1990, Tiptus, 1996). However, As mentioned, after the October democratic uprising in 1973, the link between challenges posed by slums and architectural practice and education became more explicit in the mid 1970s. A number of academic architectural design studies and research concerning human behaviour during the period of 1977-1986 (BE. 2520s) used low-income housing and communities as case studies (Horayangkura et al., 1993). However, it is important to point out that the science of human behavioural studies in architecture was employed mainly for the architects to understand the users so that architects could improve their design. It did not try to empower the users to better understand their own problems and situations. In other words, it was a science meant to increase the effectiveness of the designer, but it hardly related to the idea of self-actualization and empowerment of the users. There were different architectural programmes in architectural schools, concerning such subjects as housing for construction workers, self-sufficiency in community design, and low-income housing linking design to the livelihoods of the residents, their behaviours and lifestyles, all in an attempt to widen the architectural agenda in architectural education. There were frequent site visits to low-income communities and the students were encouraged to conduct social activities inside and outside universities.

In 1990, there were approximately 1.55 million residential units in Bangkok. The majority or 55% were constructed by the private sector, 22% by ordinary people, 12% were slums, and only 8.5% were provided by the NHA and 2.5% by others. It was clear that the NHA could not meet housing demand. Government policies during 1992-1996 focussed more on low-income groups especially for those living in slum areas. As a result, in 1992, the Urban Community Development Office (UCDO) was established under the NHA and became the Community Organizations Development Institute (CODI) in 2000. The UCDO started with a US\$50 million capital budget to make loans available to organized communities.

By mid-1997, Thailand and Bangkok suffered from the financial crisis and by late 1997 the Government of Thailand called on the IMF for a currency bail-out. Subsequently, the country was forced to accept the IMF structural adjustment programmes. The Eighth Thailand National Economic and Social Development Plan (1997-2001) aimed at sustainable development by shifting the focus from economic





development to human development (Viengsang et al., 2005). The slum dwellers' struggle was transformed from having to deal with *ad hoc* solutions to setting more sustainable long-term plans that drove changes at policy levels. By the 1990s, it was evident that slum dwellers negotiated their survival space with a more complex approach through continued lobbying, networking and partnerships.

In 2003, there were two nation-wide low-cost housing schemes proposed by the previous government headed by Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. The first one was the NHA's *Baan Eua Arthorn* Programme. The second scheme was the CODI's *Baan Mankong* Programme. The two programmes were launched in parallel. The NHA aimed to reach 600,000 low-income households and the CODI aimed to reach 300,000 low-income households around Thailand within five years. The NHA architects working for *Baan Eua Arthorn* Programme design and provide ready-to-occupy residential units with no interaction with their clients. The CODI architects working for *Baan Mankong* Programme focussed on community members' involvement and work with their clients in slum upgrading programmes.

In relation to mainstream architectural practice, the economic boom of the previous phase set the stage for the mutual reinforcement of architectural practice and education, and capitalist development. Construction enterprises were booming. Many architectural companies extended their responsibilities to include construction management. Many architects transformed themselves into project developers. A lot of the debates among architects in this phase focussed on entrepreneurship and business knowledge and the skills of architects (Tiptus, 1996; 1999). Focusing on alternative architectural practice, the emergence of UCDO, CODI and *Baan Mankong* programme informally formed the 'new architectural professionalism' in practice. Architects working for the CODI can be categorized into two main groups – first, the CODI architects who are hired directly by the CODI and, second, architects from the the Community Architects for Shelter and Environment (CASE) who often sub-contract many community development projects from the CODI. Both the CODI and the CASE architects try to integrate participation and empowerment in their design process, without being trained to work in such an approach from their architectural education background. It is important to emphasize that the emergence of the *ad hoc* practice of the new architectural professionalism of CODI and CASE architects did not have much impact on the mainstream conventional architectural education. Only a few courses or modules address the issues of low-income community, informal settlements and





participatory design in their classes. Many times architectural lecturers would bring their students to work on the CODI projects even though in some cases the work was done without being officially accredited by their schools.

At present, there are a few examples of architectural schools that have tried to integrate slum problems into their curricula, for example, M.Arch programme on Community and Environmental Architecture at the Arsom Silp Institution of the Arts and Development, B.Arch programme at the Faculty of Architecture Urban Design and Creative Arts, Mahasarakham University in the North-eastern region of Thailand, B.Arch programme at the Faculty of Architecture, Sripatum University in Bangkok and B.Sc programme at the Faculty of Architecture and Planning, Thammasart University. They all faced different kinds of obstacles and challenges. However, for this paper, it is important to emphasize that the author focus only on the case studies which she participatory observed, in order to reflect on practice. This is discussed below.

In relation to architectural values, Horayangkura (1997b) stated that architects are often perceived as egotistical artists, so the public exclude them from social activities. Moreover, he said that there are too many architectural schools producing too many similar designer-type architects. That is why the more architects the architectural schools produce, the less adequate architects the industry receives. He argued that it is crucial to have various types of specialist architects. He proposed that architectural education had to be problem-oriented, not solution-oriented. Today, architectural education inherited the Ecole des Beaux Arts and Bauhaus teaching methods, of which the 'masters' or the studio tutors are the leaders in a design studio. Thus, normative theories from the masters were prioritized over the scientific method (Horayangkura, 1997a, Horayangkura, 1994).

There is very little systematic research on architectural education to improve architectural pedagogy. Based on a piece of research concerning architectural education development conducted by Horayangkura et al. (1993) and Worawan (1984), they argued that an architectural tutor's role should be as a stimulator, not a master. Architectural design 'crit' should encompass less emotional aggravation. Design studio and architectural thesis should focus on budget and small-scale designs. Worawan referred to Donald Schon when positing that design (in a design studio) is a dialogue that emerges from collective conversations between architectural students and the tutors. He argued that the tutors should raise questions rather than provide or expect answers. It was argued by various sources (Horayangkura, 2000, Tiptus,





1996, Sthapitanonda, 2000, Yuangtrakul, 2000, Bongsadedt, 2000, Worawan, 1984) that architectural curriculum should allow more plurality in its content and more emphasis on learning from live projects, learning from doing, cross-institutional architectural workshops facilitating teamwork skills and architectural training in architectural education should be more encouraged.

Architects' roles in Thailand today address only three sectors – the commercial private sector, the governmental sector and the educational sector (Chompunich, 2006). Communities are not considered as part of official architectural practices. Horayangkura (2000) stated that there are three types of architects today who are inadequate. The first are architects who do not focus on 'design' but have the ability to work on construction management and facility management. The second are specialist architects who could be project consultants. The new architectural professionalism of CODI and CASE architects fills the third gap which Horayangkura argued for – architects who work for the lower stratum of society. This refers to poor people in rural and urban areas. Finally, at the policy level, one of the challenges to integrating subjects relating to informal settlements into architectural education is that the government has started a plan to reduce subsidies in education. Not only could this make universities more of 'a day care centre for middle-class children,' (Horayangkura, 2000) but it also forces universities to concentrate on the educational demands of the markets and money-making courses.

It is clear that the scale of the slum problem in Thailand is serious and large. Housing policies in Thailand parallel global housing policies. The relationship of the state, government and civil society respectively changed throughout time from the state-led, people-led, market-led approaches to a greater emphasis on partnership between the three main actors. The establishment of the NHA, UCDO, CODI and CASE reflect these different housing policy processes in different time periods. 'Architecture of empowerment'¹ as defined by Serageldin (1997) was introduced and implemented in Thailand through the practice of CODI and CASE architects, especially under the launch of the CODI *Baan Mankong* programme. However, it is important to emphasize that although the 'new architectural professionalism' of CODI and CASE architects was being applied, the mainstream conventional architectural education remains intact. CODI and CASE architects did not bring much from their time in architectural school. They mainly learned from practice in an *ad hoc* manner.





Reflection: Alternative Architectural Education, Case Studies from England and Thailand

As mentioned, the author has participatory observation experiences in alternative architectural education courses in England and Thailand by working as a teacher assistant in design studios or a workshop coordinator/ organizer. The case studies from England are as follow.

- Non-accredited architectural summer workshop organized by a not-for-profit organization Architecture Sans Frontieres (ASF) – UK in 2005 and 2007
- Accredited B.Arch in the International Development Studio: Shelter and Settlement after Disaster at School of Built Environment, Oxford Brookes University in 2006
- Accredited M.Sc in Urban Intervention Studio: Shelter and Settlement after Disaster, Building and Urban Design in Development at Development Planning Unit, University College London in 2007-2009

The case study from Thailand is a non-accredited architectural workshop “*Sweet Dreams Community? Workshop*”, in collaboration with Art4D Magazine, funded by Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, Ministry Of Culture in 2011.

First, a week-long ASF-UK Summer School 2005 session at the Eden Project which is an annual architectural workshop organized by the Architecture San Frontieres (ASF) – UK and the Institute for Development in Extreme Environments (IDee). The workshop is aimed at architects and architectural students. The activities were divided into two parts. One was a series of lectures on Shelter and Settlements: Principles of Planning, Poverty, Climate, and Waste, and on Rights-Based Development, and the other was practical training. Second, in comparing new architectural knowledge, another example is the architectural design studio for second and third year architectural students at the School of Built Environment, Oxford Brookes University, UK² in 2006. The studio focused on architectural design in rehabilitating informal communities in a post-disaster setting of an actual project in Bangkok. The studio proposed and focussed on four design phases in community development, P.E.A.S. - ‘to provide’, ‘enable’, ‘adapt’ and ‘sustain’ (Hamdi, 2006). Focusing on the teaching methods, the ASF Summer School 2005 workshop prioritized learning from doing and role playing. The twenty-five students were divided into five smaller groups, who then were expected



to build a community out of waste materials from The Eden Project's recycling centre within two days. The participants were assigned to role play the urban poor in order to understand how informal communities formed. Based on observations, it is likely that the role playing was effective. At the beginning, the participants argued over materials and quarrelled over the division of space and walkways as if they were the urban poor struggling to build their own houses with limited resources. No one thought about communal space. Afterwards, a sense of community emerged as the participants realised that they could not build everything by themselves. Community space also emerges in a similar spontaneous manner without prior planning. A challenge of the ASF Summer School 2005 lies in maintaining continuity to further develop and nurture understanding and discussions after the workshop ended. Discussions were under way with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) to allow students or architects interested in development to take the workshop as an official architectural credit for their course and practice. The course has recently been approved as part of RIBA's Continuing Professional Development (CPD) obligations. The short-term workshop is an example of an *ad hoc* solution which tries to transform conventional architectural education through their small interventions.



Fig 1: Architectural summer workshop organized by Architecture Sans Frontieres (ASF) – UK, 2005



Fig 2: B.Arch in the International Development Studio: Shelter and Settlement after Disaster at School of Built Environment, Oxford Brookes University

In tandem with the ASF Summer School 2005, the teaching methods of the design studio for the second and third year architectural students at the School of Built Environment, Oxford Brookes University were role playing, planning workshops, working as a group, lectures with basic development theories and case studies, film discussions and hands-on design experiments with scrap materials. The role play and hands-on experiments seemed to be effective. The students were very enthusiastic. However, because of financial constraints, field trips to the real site were not possible. Thus the students had no contact with actual clients. This begs the following question - to what extent can participatory design be taught without making contact with the actual clients and encountering the complexity of live projects? It is certain that role playing could be an effective pedagogical method, but it is limited when it comes to facilitating an understanding of complex situations.

With regard to the alternative architectural teaching methods and skills, the two week ASF-UK Summer School 2007³ in Bangkok explored the 'real' context of informal settlements in Bangkok. Its aim was to foster an understanding of the role of





an architect as a ‘catalyst’. The participants were encouraged to dialogue with actual clients on live projects. They were encouraged to shape their own design brief and define their own design problems and methodology. From observation, it was difficult for both the participants and the tutors. Not every participant was ready to learn by themselves and felt frustrated. At the end, the outcomes were varied – children’s toys designed from scrap materials, community mapping models aimed to promote interaction with the local community, data collection from the locals and a photo exhibition attempting to raise self-awareness of the locals. In actual fact, most of the proposed design projects were a mere means to open up dialogue. Advantages of the workshop were its *ad hoc* character. Immense time constraints forced students to improvise and be creative. Challenges had to do with the complexity of dealing with actual clients in their actual context with limited time. Finally, it was important to strike the right balance between the guidelines the tutors provided and the freedom the participants needed to think autonomously and make decisions.

Third, Urban Intervention Studio: Shelter and Settlement after Disaster, a graduate studio run by Prof. Nabeel Hamdi, Dr. Cassidy Johnson, Sara Feys and Supitcha Tovivich (teacher assistant), which forms part of Building and Urban Design in Development at Development Planning Unit, University College London. The thirteen students from various background and experiences are faced with a community upgrading in Suan Plu, Bangkok after a fire. Inspired by the work of Community Architects for Shelter and Environment (CASE) in Thailand, the studio started off with a role play where each student takes up a stance of a stakeholder – a garbage collector, tuk-tuk driver, food peddler or a common labourer that represents the 250 families of SuanPlu



Fig 3: Architectural summer workshop organized by Architecture Sans Frontières (ASF) – UK, 2007





community. The students then proceeded to collectively set up the lives of their community, its livelihood, problems and potential opportunities. By role-playing community members, the students made models of their

‘dream homes’ prior to being told the size of their land. Confusion ensued when all the models could not fit onto their given meager piece of land, each fighting and negotiating, trying to gain the prime roadside locations. With no solution in sight, the students set up their own sub-workshop to generate site guidelines and then transformed their roles to be architects who have been given the brief of community upgrading. The design process is divided into 4 stages – the P.E.A.S. The main question is to find a balance between too much and too little design, its flexibility and contribution towards their livelihood. The second term progressed with individual work, continuing with P.E.A.S. using data collected in the first term. The final outcome is diverse. Games and tool kits were produced for architects and communities to learn and design together; to create a design structure that each community members can fill in the blanks according to their needs and capabilities. Projects such as exploration of urban refuse as building materials, children see-saw that double as a water pump, leaflets inviting people to join in with community gray-water management, use of bio-gas and community vegetable plots were proposed as a mean to lure and trick people into working together as a community.

The final presentation brought about intense and fascinating discussion, generating a dialogue rather than defending an idea. Students reflected their views and opinions in direct terms with several questioning the difficulties in finding the right balance between structured and emergence design; some feels the urge to return to their traditional trial and tested design process; others pointing out the faults within their own designs. Questions such as what is ‘Vernacular Architecture’ were raised. Is the studio putting too much emphasis onto the community requirements? What everyone agreed on was the fact that the work was in no way conclusive, that this is only a beginning towards a participatory learning and design process. What was given was no pre-formulated answer, but a way to questions their way towards some answers, allowing them to re-examine the role of architects in community development field. The studio offers no correct answer, no definitive end to a question; it simply activates the mind to open its door to all these questions.





Fig 4: M.Sc in Urban Intervention Studio: Shelter and Settlement after Disaster, Building and Urban Design in Development at Development Planning Unit, University College London

Forth, focusing on the case study from Thailand, a non-accredited architectural workshop “Sweet Dreams Community? Workshop”, in collaboration with Art4D Magazine, funded by Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, Ministry Of Culture conducted over a short period of 3 days. Forty people participating in the workshop were architects, and architecture and urban planning students from various educational institutes, each playing a role of a member of a community to help create their own ‘Sweet Dreams Community’ under different types of limitations. The seminar involved different processes of collective learning, from question and answer sessions, discussion groups, model making, decision making and teamwork effort, including brainstorming in a collective design process, which is the actual design method of many architects when working on community projects.

Participants were divided into small groups to exchange their own definitions of ‘house’, ‘community’ and ‘city’. The task was later adjusted where the 40 participants were placed in a simulation situation, in which they

were the lucky people chosen by a makebelieve government to design and create a prototype project called ‘Sweet Dreams Community’. The budget was set to be reasonable and most beneficial according to the project, without having to consider much about the relatable legal issues. The participants had to create a model with the scale of 1:75 in 2 hours, and figure out the planning of a community on a make-believe piece of land where on one side is a beautiful canal and on the other side is a dumpster. The participants questioned the reality of the situation of how no one



would want to live next to a dumpster unless it included other compensations, such as a bigger piece of land, or the location was nearer to a communal garden, while the romanticized notion of the community was questioned continually. The final task was the expropriation of some of the land in the community to build a new expressway announced by the make-believe government. The participants had 5 hours to create new models and readjust the plan. It was interesting to see future architects and urban planners, who were playing the roles of members of a community, deciding to throw away their 'dream house' models and readjust the whole plan to suite a more limited space. The participants organized themselves into groups to make decisions about the new planning of the community and the new rules that everybody has to live under. Representatives were chosen, people sounded out their opinions and subgroups were created, to find as many solutions as possible. Increasingly, it became obvious that the participants were immersing themselves more and more into their roles as the community's members. The tasks, the pressure and problems became the force that pushed everybody to think and figure out solutions together, which is no different from actual community development work. It is very common that a community that is under some sort of pressure can be united much more powerfully than a community where people live their lives separately. The final plan was very banal looking, with small, equal plots of land and straight lines of street and roads. Two prototypes of house were made to create a more harmonious appearance, and the space under the expressway was turned into a green area. Everyone agreed not to step away from the expressway line too much (if they decided to do things legally, there would not be enough space). And, it turned out to be interesting to see how architects and urban planners take off their professional hats, and while they wear the hat of a community member laws become more negotiable if a particular case holds appropriate reasons. Many of the participants said that they spent most of the time designing the process rather than designing a house. The complexity of the adjustment lay in the negotiations between different individuals and sub-groups, as well as discussion, arguments, exchanges of ideas, collective decision-making and design process, and categorization of working groups according to each person's interest and expertise.

There is no doubt that community development work contains many complex issues, and it requires the knowledge, abilities and creativity to design a practicality of the outcome as much as the process. The period of 3 days for a workshop cannot



do more than stimulate future architects and urban planners to start to question the knowledge and the tools they are accustomed with when they design a ‘house’, ‘community’ and ‘city’. At the very least, what they have gained in return is the ability to learn how to work with a community through a simulated situation where they became a member of a community, as well as the ability to question the ‘romanticized’ notion

of the thing called community. After all, a community is not a place where everybody is nice, considerate, loving, harmonious and agreeable, so all the challenges lie in the ability to create the right balance of different needs, and finding the most compromising spot where everything can meet.



Image 5: “Sweet Dreams Community? Workshop”, in collaboration with Art4D Magazine, funded by Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, Ministry Of Culture.



Conclusion and Recommendations

Current conventional architectural education mainly produces architects who work for private developers supporting the capitalist market. Although, there are a few examples of *ad hoc* alternative architectural courses which have tried to integrate slums and participatory design into its curriculum, all of them experienced different challenges. Community development is a profession that requires creativity in design (both the process and the outcome) more than the attitude of social working that lacks proper knowledge and capability. Wearing a hat and playing the role of the ‘others’ should somehow open new perspectives and expand the existing frames of how one answers questions with more possibilities. It is not that the confidence and skill of experts are not important, but learning to listen to what other people have to say, which might take a longer time, help to find more diverse alternatives of designs that can provide answers to the problems in a much more efficient manner in the long run.

Certainly, the problem is not a lack of architecturally related courses which integrate development practice agenda. The problem is that they are not mainstream. However, having more architectural courses concerning issues cannot guarantee any explicit change in practice, especially if that means merely to forward duplicitous development jargon – participation and empowerment – into architectural study. This means that a better acknowledgement of the notion of participation and empowerment in theory and practice needs to be embedded in the new architectural knowledge.

Finally, the author argues that there are opportunities in the integration of participatory design and community development in alternative architectural education. First, focusing on values, participatory design and community development enrich architectural profession and education, as it supports the roles of architects and architectural educators as a supporter and catalyst. Moreover it makes design more effective to users. Second, the new architectural knowledge related to participatory design and community development helps bridging the gap between mainstream architecture and the majority of the world population. Third, teaching and training participatory design adds extra architectural skills which architects and architectural students can adapt with many types of clients and building projects. It also nurtures an open-minded character. Group-working, learning from implementing live projects and flexible teaching methods are key elements to nurture teamwork and improvisational skills of architectural students.





338 หน้าจั่ว: ว่าด้วยสถาปัตยกรรม การออกแบบ และสภาพแวดล้อม
วารสารวิชาการ คณะสถาปัตยกรรมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร

At the same time, the challenges are evident. First, the most important barrier concerns curriculum and course management. Insufficient time for time-consuming community work during short-time semester, lack of staff who have the appropriate knowledge and skills, and a perception of the unsafe environment of community work can be perceived as the crucial factors that make community work more difficult and less attractive than architectural office work. Second, due to the rigid curriculum of the undergraduate architectural course, more diverse optional alternative modules related to community practice, short-term workshops and encouraging students to choose community work in their Training Module in the fourth year can be a useful means in order to make small changes. Finally, more serious collaboration amongst conventional architectural schools, alternative architectural courses, architectural professional institutions, practitioners and organizations such as CODI and CASE architects, local governmental authorities which are responsible for dealing with low-income housing and the civil-society networks of local communities need to be strengthened. Some important factors to nurture alternative architectural education include the government's political will and commitment to solve the problem of urban poor community, financial subsidies from government authorities for community projects or alternative architectural courses, serious partnerships, teamwork and technical support between architectural schools and relevant organizations and credit endorsement for community work.





NOTES

¹ In theory, the term ‘architecture of empowerment’ is “*a built environment which responds to the needs of the poor and destitute, while respecting their humanity and putting them in charge of their own destinies.*” (Serageldin, 1997: 8) Serageldin emphasized that “The architecture of empowerment is not an abandonment of the traditional role of the architects as form-giver, or of the urban planner as land-use specialist; rather, it is an enrichment of these professions. Just as a deeper appreciation of environmental issues does not restrict the creativity of architects, but adds an extra dimension to their work, so this deeper understanding of the needs of the

bulk of humanity makes architecture and urban planning – to the extent that they are disciplines concerned with creating a better built environment for humans – more effective and more sensitive professions.” (Serageldin 1997: 8)

² The design studio was facilitated by Nabeel Hamdi, David Sanderson, Melissa Kinnear and Supitcha Tovivich (teacher assistant).

³ Co-organized by ASF-UK, IDEE and the local community architects – Community Architects for Shelter and Environment (CASE)

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