"untitled"

AIARG Conference 2012

School of Architecture, Dublin Institute of Technology, DIT - Bolton Street - 20 - 21 January 2012

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Learning from Empty Space:  
A case study of inter-disciplinary experiential design pedagogy and urban investigation in Belfast

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This paper describes a joint research project between students and staff of architecture and graphic design that explores whether collaborative, field-based approaches to urban design can improve the connection between theory and practice as currently taught to future design professionals. Through a series of field-based interdisciplinary teaching and learning activities, the research examines ways to share skills that help designers engage, physically and socially, within urban contexts outside of their studio environments; interacting with the people who live and work in a neglected urban area of Belfast.

The paper argues, from the critical theory and literature, that narrative, or ‘urban storytelling’ plays an important role in developing an appropriate methodology for balancing professional and local knowledge toward the production of urban space (Bartholemew, & Locher 2007; Blundell Jones, Petrescu and Till 2005). Storytelling is interpreted as a way to encourage an inclusive consideration of the symbolic and physical issues affecting the social life of urban spaces (Whyte 1980); skills that help designers build understanding from within rather than as an outsider (Hollis, 2003). The paper discusses the implications of this framework for design practice and pedagogy.

Through evidence from photographic and video documentation of selected events, triangulated through participant observation, qualitative evaluative feedback, and surveys this paper discusses the lessons for improving methods to engage students, and by extension professional designers, to participate with their wider community and the built environment, and to develop an improved ability to think critically (Atherton 2009). The paper concludes with lessons for better connecting theory, practice and the skills capacity of designers, and lay-people to collaboratively develop place-driven visions prior to any attempts at imposing “expert” design solutions on existing urban communities.
Dear Applicant,

Thank you for submitting your recent abstract for the AIARG 'Untitled' Conference 2012. We are pleased to inform you that your submission has been successful. The conference will run on the 20 and 21 January.

Please note that each presentation should last 20 minutes maximum (i.e. some 2,500-3,000 word text). We will be in touch shortly regarding the formatting of your abstract such that it can be distributed to the other delegates at the conference. We should also be able to inform you soon about the conference fee and the registration process.

There will be a total of 36 papers delivered at the conference. Please find attached a preliminary programme in which we have gathered the papers into sessions into two parallel sessions. Those of you who submitted a range of abstracts should consult the programme to identify the specific submission which has been successful. Please inform us if you require any revisions to be made regarding the title of your presentation, your accreditation etc. The keynote speakers are yet to be confirmed.

At the moment the sessions are in no particular order. We would be grateful if you could inform us at this stage if you are unable to attend on either of the days. We will be able to consider this as we prepare the timetable.

If you have any further questions please contact either myself or Noel (noel.brady@dit.ie).

We very much look forward to meeting you in January.

Kind regards,

Brian

Brian Ward
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Learning from Empty Space: Urban Research Belfast
Inter-Disciplinary Experiential Design and Pedagogy

Saul M Golden
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CONTEXT:
Belfast city centre
PROBLEMS OF THE CITY: Poor quality public space
PROBLEMS OF THE CITY:
Loss of active streetscape
social and community engagement
Can Collaborative, Field-based Approaches to Urban Design Improve the Connection Between Theory and Practice as Currently Taught to Future Design Professionals?

PEDAGOGIC FRAMEWORK: T.A.L.K.

Teaching
- Abstract Theory
- Place-based Storytelling
- Experiential Activities

Action
- Individual
- Collective

Learning
- Words & Images
- Concrete Experiments

Knowledge
- ‘How’ & ‘That’
- Questioning and Exploring
- Reflection & Application

Pedagogic Theory adapted from Race, Biggs & Tang, Agyris & Schön, Kolb, and Bloom
Architecture and Visual Communications Students: 
*World Café Reading and Theory Mapping* (© World Cafe)
EXPERIENCE:
Collaboration
Machines for Experiential Urban Learning

The MEUL is the translation of your site analysis and insight into a temporary work in each location; a physical intervention that should help reveal the location or highlight its existence or perceived character, relevant to the wider urban and socio-economic context.
triangulation
(whyte 1980)
EXPERIMENT:
Machines for Experiential Urban Learning (M.E.U.L.)

Adapted from Whyte, Gehl, Project for Public Spaces, Ltd.
collaboration, risk, and advocacy
APPLICATION:
Empty Space - Active Place
Inter-disciplinary

Survey evaluation

Pedagogy

Urban Place
negotiating difference and complexity
BEAUTY IN THE BROKEN
Narratives, in this project, are meant to help elicit and evaluate higher levels of critical thinking on the social life of urban spaces; seeking to show understanding from within rather than as an outsider.