Project Name: Change by Design (Cbd)

ASF International Member Organization: Architecture Sans Frontières (UK)

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The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, University College London
Scarcity and Creativity in the Built Environment (SCIBE), University of Westminster
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http://www.asf-uk.org/change-by-design

Change by Design is a programme led by non-profit organization Architecture Sans Frontières-UK (ASF-UK), with the aim to reflect on and practice participatory design as a means to promote inclusive and equitable urban change. Since 2009, ASF-UK has worked with a number of partners and supporting institutions to generate field workshops and seminars focused on introducing a critical design perspective into participatory informal settlement upgrading practices. Through engagements with collectives struggling for the rights of informal settlement dwellers in Salvador da Bahia (Brazil), Nairobi (Kenya), and Quito (Ecuador), the Change by Design programme has explored the role of participatory design in the production of a more just city. Most recently ASF-UK adapted this approach to work with London citizens and local stakeholders to explore the impact of large-scale development and regeneration in London on local communities. Under this perspective, participatory design should question exploitative social relations and the unequal distribution of resources, as well as opening up spaces for new imaginaries about the city, citizenship and urban transformations.
The Hasselt Charter

2. Foster the socially responsible role of built environment professionals by stimulating social modes of practice before speculative economic profitability;

All of the workshops encourage built environment professionals to reflect on participatory approaches to producing the built environment. The key objective has been to build methodologies and approaches to participatory design that work with civil society actors strategically towards the advancement of social justice in cities, addressing multiple scales (from the dwelling to the city) of the production of space, engaging explicitly with social diversity within communities, and enabling interdisciplinarity needed to advance the social production of habitat.

Meanwhile, through Cbd seminars and training events (within World Urban Forum in Naples and Medellin and series of conferences where Cbd has been disseminated) we have been promoting more widely the lessons from the workshops. Our reports are key for such dissemination among external audiences. Now Cbd reports are incorporated into teaching programmes of key masters and training programmes in the field, namely the MSc in Social Development Practice offered by the DPU (The Bartlett Development Planning Unit) and through Global Studio – an international education programme promoting inclusive urbanisation through innovation in participatory design and planning. The objective here is to influence the international community of practice involved in the social production of habitat, contributing with methodologies and approaches to participatory design.
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4. Identify, disseminate and work alongside public institutions, multilateral organisations and private sector’s policies, programmes and sustainable socio-economic systems fostering social equity and urban inclusion within the built environment;

Through our seminars and training events we have been lobbying at the World Urban Forum events with international agencies and governments for more participatory ways of upgrading informal settlements. Meanwhile, our workshops have nurtured close partnerships with locally affected groups and here we are supporting them in their advocacy work with local and national governments.

In Brazil, together with the Movimento dos Sem Terra da Bahia we met with the governor of the state of Bahia as well as carrying out a pilot workshop involving community groups, government officials and local professionals. In Nairobi our local partner Pamoja Trust capitalized on our workshop and products to raise visibility of the need for participatory processes to informal settlement upgrading in Kenya; in Quito, the community of Los Pinos used the workshop and report to enable access to security of tenure and illustrate a precedent for participatory means to build neighbourhoods in line with Buen Vivir principles; and our work in London with Citizens UK considers the social impact of the recently proposed high speed rail upgrade (HS2) at London Euston Station, with the aim of feeding into wider sets of recommendations for more democratic and inclusive forms of regeneration.
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8. Support participatory, democratic, multicultural and interdisciplinary processes and approaches in strengthening community solidarity as a factor of rural and urban social development;

Workshops in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil (2009 and 2010), Nairobi, Kenya (2011) and Quito, Ecuador (2013) consisted of two weeks of activities in close collaboration with local partners and attracted on average 20 international participants from a variety of backgrounds. Each of these two-week workshops was planned in collaboration with local partners, with strategic objectives associated with particular contestations and concerns embedded in each of the local contexts.

In the case of Salvador de Bahia, Brazil, the workshop collaborations and discussions helped MST9 (Movimento Dos Sem Teto) to further demonstrate their ability to plan, upgrade and consolidate their occupations at the stage of negotiating with the state of Bahia government.

In the context of Nairobi, Kenya, the workshop opened a discussion around the Kenyan Slum Upgrading Programme (KENSUP) and helped the Pamoja Trust to further reflect on their participatory design approaches, enabling the community to influence, shape and contest the top down approach taken by the governmental authorities.

In Quito, Ecuador, the workshop contributed to ongoing efforts to set precedents for participatory approaches in the context of informal settlement upgrading, taking into consideration the progressive development agenda based on the ideals of social movements “Buen Vivir”.

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