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Community Partnership as a Foundation for Scholarship, Pedagogy, and Research—An Interactive Session

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Abstract

In Good Deeds Good Design, Roberta Feldman states that empowering community design facilitates effective, informed decision-making by "people who have traditionally had minimal say" (Feldman, 2003, 110). Doing this requires designers to consider communities as partners rather than clients and see their work as a collective endeavor rather than a professional gift. At Iowa State University, faculty in multiple departments are using partnership-based outreach methods to generate disciplinary and trans-disciplinary projects engaging studio teaching, research, and scholarship. Critical to these projects is the idea that partnership inverts the traditional power relationship between designers and underserved communities by valuing local knowledge equally with professional design skills. In these relationships, designers and design students bring important abilities to visualize alternatives and synthesize diverse types of knowledge to the table. Community partners bring equally valuable knowledge about history and place that the designers would be unable to access without local partners. This symposium will begin with a PechaKucha-style overview of panelists' work followed by an interactive session in which panelists and audience members will collaboratively shift relationships to create new knowledge by examining a contemporary issue from multiple points of view. The underlying premise of this session is that spatial design is an instrumental praxis that can shape and potentially transform reality (Allen, 1999, 50). Doing so effectively requires dealing with instrumental tools such as function and materiality and understanding the broader context of social, economic, and political relationships that create place and can effectively only be accessed through local partnerships.

Disciplines
Architecture | Higher Education | Landscape Architecture

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tion options, such as biking and walking, in Boulder as it moves toward its Transportation Master Plan Update. GUB engaged middle and high school youth in the mapping activities and walk audits that provided feedback. This project describes the methods for youth engagement in the City of Boulder's Transportation Master Plan Update and some results of the engagement activities with middle and high school students. Methods and analysis were designed to uncover whether and how active transport and independent mobility are connected to proximity to bike facilities, schools, and parks and other youth-identified social spaces. Finally, this project was an opportunity for young people to learn about sustainable transportation issues related to their city. To achieve such goals, this project employed a series of age-specific qualitative methods, including map annotation and map elicitation with youth, interactive presentations of different walking and biking environments, and neighborhood walkabouts with youth. The results of this project advance research and practice for transportation planning and youth engagement by assessing impacts of youth engagement in the planning decision-making process and providing insights for other cities who want to promote active transportation for underserved parts of the population.

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In *Good Deeds Good Design*, Roberta Feldman states that empowering community design facilitates effective, informed decision-making by "people who have traditionally had minimal say" (Feldman, 2003, 110). Doing this requires designers to consider communities as partners rather than clients and see their work as a collective endeavor rather than a professional gift. At Iowa State University, faculty in multiple departments are using partnership-based outreach methods to generate disciplinary and trans-disciplinary projects engaging studio teaching, research, and scholarship. Critical to these projects is the idea that partnership inverts the traditional power relationship between designers and underserved communities by valuing local knowledge equally with professional design skills. In these relationships, designers and design students bring important abilities to visualize alternatives and synthesize diverse types of knowledge to the table. Community partners bring equally valuable knowledge about history and place that the designers would be unable to access without local partners. This symposium will begin with a PechaKucha-style overview of panelists' work followed by an interactive session in which panelists and audience members will collaboratively shift relationships to create new knowledge by examining a contemporary issue from multiple points of view. The underlying premise of this session is that spatial design is an instrumental praxis that can shape and potentially transform reality (Allen, 1999, 50). Doing so effectively requires dealing with instrumental tools such as function and materiality and understanding the broader context of social, economic, and political relationships that create place and can effectively only be accessed through local partnerships.

Presentation #1: The Design Studio as a Collaborative Model of Comprehensive Design

The Innovation Studio partners design students, design professionals and community stakeholders to tackle symbiotic relationships between industrial ecologies and natural systems. Current environmental and infrastructural concerns require matching technical solutions with community concerns, satisfying environmental regulations and meeting limited budgets. The studio used a design process involving design research, design thinking, and design proposals; this paper aims to illustrate the benefits of integrating these concerns into comprehensive project proposals. The first studio offered in the spring of 2013 explored the Missouri River along the borders of Iowa and Nebraska. Students addressed issues of complexity, scale, infrastructure, and environment. The studio was a collaborative effort between university students, design professionals, and community stakeholders to create opportunities for each partner to work together on a large-scale environmental and infrastructural problem. The Innovation Studio seeks a new paradigm for environmental design; to test

pedagogical methods for interdisciplinary, collaborative, project-based work; and to build bridges between academia, professionals and communities. The joint effort began with students encountering problems that need to be defined rather than receiving a spelled out and clarified program or project brief. As a result, students learn about problem framing after the initial inquiry and discuss with community focus groups to decide on a specific aspect to tackle. The goal of the initial phase is to create student experts related to topics of interest around sources of energy, environmental systems, and design precedents. Students discuss this expert knowledge with the focus groups and lead sessions to learn from community experts about related energy, systems, and precedents of the river corridor. The work develops from the discussed framework, and students along with design professionals identify real positions on the issues and outline key steps for students to develop further as design frameworks. Students synthesize the initial research, community consultation, and professional collaboration into design projects to test early assumptions and communicate even more design opportunities. The studio outcomes reach beyond the benefit of environmental, educational, and economic issues to explore the long-term health of river systems and adjacent communities.

Presentation #2: Sustainability and Economy—Cost for Performance

This project is a collaboration between Greater Des Moines Habitat for Humanity (GDMHFH) and two Master of Science in Architecture (MS Arch) theses students. A studio of Master of Architecture (M Arch) students and the overseeing faculty aid the collaboration. With an emphasis on sustainability and economy, the studio will produce affordable housing designs over the current semester to develop two lots for GDM Habitat for Humanity in Des Moines, Iowa, as a pilot project for the non-profit organization. Once the schematic phase is completed, the MS Arch students will continue the project through the end of the construction phase. Each group involved has established a set of goals as outlined below. The MS Arch students have created a two-part thesis project that will do conceptual research at the building and neighborhood scales and monitor the project after completion. One will analyze the cost of sustainable, affordable development and the implications it can have on a neighborhood, while the other will be studying the application of passive and active solar design techniques in affordable housing to reach the end goal of a net zero affordable unit. The outcome will be two thesis documents that complement one another and

can be easily shared with the public and other local and regional Habitat affiliates as an educational reference for all. The M Arch class has been challenged to investigate the viability within the budgetary and volunteer labor constraints of GDMHFH to decide which systems offer the greatest return on investment while striving to reach a net-zero home design in our climate. University collaboration provides the ability for organizations such as GDMHFH to have the resources to investigate numerous schemes and non-traditional systems without substantial investment. In return, the students are excited about the possibility of seeing their designs built in the real world as a home for real families. The real-world context of the project pulls the students away from novelty for novelty's sake, towards a focus on innovation for the sake of performance. Faculty members are interested in the opportunity to investigate the tie between economy and sustainability of the project. Due to the limited budget, there is an interest in documenting each scheme, with specific emphasis on breaking the perception that sustainable performance undeniably leads to dramatically increased project cost. Environmental analysis software with a costing module will be used to determine the proposed performative levels and project cost for each proposal. This will be followed by field testing of the completed projects to compare modeled conditions to built conditions. The primary research goal is to provide proof of concept for design strategies which culminate in a sustainable built product at a highly economical price point.

Presentation #3: Indigenous Place-Making: Rethinking Design Practice, Process, and Teaching

Using the work of a number of studio projects over the course of several years undertaken in partnership with Indigenous Nations (American Indians/Native Americans/Tribal Nations/First Nations/Indians) both at ISU and at UNM/iD+Pi, as well as ongoing work on the iArchitecture project, we will look at a number of issues of both equitable place-making and change. These studio projects are at different levels and inter-disciplinary, and involve students, faculty, and consultants from the disciplines of architecture, landscape architecture, and planning, as well as cultural geographers and environmental social scientists. How does or how can projects involving Indigenous place-making change not only the processes and approaches for research and design, as well as the outcome(s) of place-making, but also impact knowing, education, and pedagogy, especially when undertaken as part of the education and training of students? This clearly requires projects that take a critical

stance from role and responsibility definitions to learning and understanding other values. This presentation will raise issues of definition, 'knowledge' and proof, control, and sovereignty, and the vested politics of both colonized and colonizers, or minority and majority stakeholders; the potential of Indigenous place-making as a change-agent; environmental issues for embedded, often voiceless and powerless groups and communities; and issues of preservation and heritage. Additionally, how is Indigenous place-making both changing and remaining the same? How is it undertaken in a critical way and negotiated within the community? Between communities? Between community(s) and 'authorities'? Between community(s) and research and design professionals (Indigenous or not Indigenous)? What are the impacts or potential impacts for learning and knowing, and for educational institutions, professional disciplines, and practices on all the various stakeholders?

Presentation #4: Partner-Translate-Impact: A Partnership-Based Model for Design Pedagogy and Research

The Bridge Studio at Iowa State University partners with local communities to address issues including neighborhood infrastructure, affordable housing, post-disaster recovery, and in all cases sustainable design as a method for achieving place-based empowerment. Each semester-long studio engages students in architecture, landscape architecture, interior design, and planning in work that builds on partnerships developed over time. The studio uses a method of Partner-Translate-Impact to gain local knowledge, identify needs and desires, develop priorities, and ultimately implement change. The studio repositions students as partners with communities rather than outside professionals, placing both in strategic roles that engage broader issues through design. These partnerships also establish long-term relationships between studio faculty and communities, facilitating ongoing research and ensuring project impacts. Partnering with a community and translating ideas developed through this partnership into design helps students experience how what sociologist Robert Gutman calls "nonmaterial culture" informs the production of material form, and thus how designers can proactively contribute to creating a just built environment that includes and values all of its inhabitants (Gutman, 2010, 215). At the beginning of each project, students meet with local residents to discuss their memories and values, focusing on specific issues without using "design lingo." They also develop partnerships with local businesses, non-profits, schools, and neighborhood associations to negotiate logistics and create plans for

project implementation. The partnerships created during each Bridge Studio project not only help the students create meaningful, impactful projects, but also connect people within the neighborhood and maintain continuity between faculty at Iowa State and the neighborhood, enabling ongoing design and research that extends beyond the semester. Partnership is the foundation of the Bridge Studio as a model for progressive outreach pedagogy and research that reconstructs design's relationship to community while also creating real impact in partner communities.

Presentation #5: Student-Community Partnerships in Participatory Research

Two great challenges facing small communities are understanding how the community as a whole values and uses landscape systems, and secondly, gaining a working understanding of hidden dimensions of system "work." As a foundation for community planning, student-led phenomenological studies followed by participatory content analysis have proven a viable foundation for both generating community specific information and providing a real-time/real-space learning opportunity for residents, enabling design students and residents to partner effectively in proposing design. As a component of the LA 401: Community Design capstone studio at Iowa State, this approach to community partnership has allowed students and client communities to propose successful programs and designs for projects as diverse as riverfronts, large parks, and neighborhood rebuilding after natural disaster. This paper will present examples of participatory research partnerships utilizing phenomenological research designs that were created in the context of the community design studio. The first used college studies as a way to open the discussion of place experience and place performance for users, engaging residents of different districts and/or ages in projecting images of existing and imagined futures in response to prompt questions written by students. Resulting compositions of place and program were displayed and parsed by residents and design students, providing insight into both human experience and landscape processes and place qualities that support place identity and community life. The second approach engaged residents in focus groups composed of types of users, followed by data collection to using GPS-enabled cameras to locate and comment on features or qualities relevant to topics introduced by residents in the focus group discussion. The data collected was uploaded using web-mapping technologies and became available in real time, so that participants and design students could collaborate in content analysis and suggest follow-up studies and

planning approaches that were responsive to local need and place values. The participatory research approaches described helped both students and participants understand the variety of needs, activities underpinning social life, and preferred qualities of community landscape shared by residents, and provided documentation of landscape performance in terms understandable to local audiences. One key element of a participatory research framework is maintaining quality of the data and analysis. In the phenomenological inquiries presented here, teaching the research process to students as a rigorous method of inquiry, along with empowerment principles, was critical to maintaining quality while establishing authentic partnership in the inquiry. Students and clients must both understand the distinction between looser participatory design, which does not make evidence-based claims about participant information, and partnership roles in developing and utilizing knowledge. Qualitative methods are notoriously slippery, relying on researchers to actively guide data collection and following analysis with insight. To maintain focus while soliciting rich, situated information useful for understanding and solving the physical planning/design problem, partners design a set of queries or directives that guide the range, type, and spatial extent of the information to be provided by participants and then test the range of responses prior to finalizing the workshop design. During the engagement process, partnering students and clients can guide action and reflective discussion appropriately to ensure quality and equitable participation.

Presentation #6: Community Design Lab: Community Partnerships

The Community Design Lab (CDL) is a partnership between Iowa State University College of Design and the office of extension and outreach. Our team encompasses many fields of expertise and is built within a multi-disciplinary framework: landscape architecture, architecture, and community and regional planning. CDL's goal is to bridge design knowledge and a broad range of expertise to shape vibrant and empowered communities by effectively engaging and learning from residents' local knowledge. Our mission is to partner with communities and organizations to address issues of public space, housing, neighborhood development, capacity building, and sustainable infrastructure; to provide leadership through design by addressing and integrating issues of affordability, equity, and resilience through beautiful, place-based, and inclusive tactics; and to demonstrate new models of design practice, education, and research that build on existing assets while looking toward the future. We foster collaboration with communities as a valuable pedagogical and community design model; striving to advance sustainable design through education, research, and design solutions that improve community health through the physical environment. We work collaboratively with students, communities, and organizations to create innovative strategies across scales. Community residents and organizations are encouraged to speak openly about personal ideas and concerns in their community. We realize the importance of local knowledge in addressing design constraints and opportunities. These insights assist in our design methods and approach to resolving existing issues and promoting a functional and unique design solution. Collaboration with communities includes design charrettes, focus groups, studio projects, and other community engagement tactics to increase long-term community ownership of enhanced ecologies and improved public health. Community partners move from goal-setting to design to implementation; we gain knowledge through partnerships and seek local solutions that find synergy between urban and rural issues. These collaborations yield a stronger understanding of how research expertise and design knowledge help shape vibrant and empowered communities. Communities have produced projects that examine historic urban corridors, sustainable and affordable housing, links between community development and storm water systems, and revival of built infrastructure as an anchor for downtown revitalization.