Pedagogical innovation week

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Description

Since 2015, the Faculty of Architecture (Université libre de Bruxelles) organises the 'Semaine d'Innovation Pedagogique' (SIP) (En. Pedagogical Innovation week). The format proposed is an intensive one-week-long design workshop for architecture and landscape architecture students (2nd and 3rd year Bachelor and 1st year Master). During this week teachers, researchers or practitioners are invited to propose a workshop on the theme of their choice. The particularity of this pedagogical setting lies in the variety of workshops that emerge each year with their specific methodological approach. Two common aims can be perceived: (i) to develop the capacity of students in having a reflexive approach to their practice and (ii) to confront students with real-life settings in relation to various actors (e.g. scientists, academics, artists, public authorities, civil society or users of the city). Thus, a co-creational pedagogical setting emerges that offers the opportunity for students to tackle societal challenges related to sustainability.

In the frame of action research projects carried out previously by LoUIsE Lab (in collaboration with EGEB), the SIP became more than a pedagogical setting, but a place of experimentation to bring different and, often creative, solutions to a specific context. The students' engagement brought a refreshing dynamic to ongoing dynamics in different ways: production of visual documents (e.g. architectural models, plans and schemes), data collection, field observations, and involvement in the transformation of the physical space (if applicable – in the case of construction activities).

These outputs and outcomes are specific to the capacity and skills of students trained in the spatial design disciplines (architecture, landscape architecture, urban design and urban planning).

- **Public visibility**: The involvement of the students creates the conditions to bring a new focus on the Lab: a fresh dynamic bringing a concentrated effort on a particular site.

- **Community engagement & building coalitions**: In our previous experiences, the citizens often interacted with students in formal (e.g. during exchanges in their home or in a public space) and informal ways (e.g. ad-hoc discussion in the public space, citizens providing food and refreshments).

- **Power, amplification of voices and accountability**: The involvement of students in the Lab might create a new space for interaction between stakeholders. This pedagogical setting offers a mutual learning environment for students, but also for the stakeholders involved in the Lab such as inhabitants of Rue Gray, non-profit organisations working in Rue Gray (members of Délier les fils de l'eau), representatives of public authority (municipal level), technicians from water agencies (Hydria). Our premise is that by focusing on what we can learn from each other the power dynamics become less predominant.

- **Documentation**: The production of documents during the intensive week is an integral part of the pedagogical program and can be oriented towards the specific needs of the Lab. Based on our previous experiences, the interest of stakeholders in joining lies in the interaction with students and their capacity to bring a fresh perspective on the possible future spatial transformation of the area. The creation of a new space of interaction, one that is less constrained by existing dynamics – specific to the pedagogical setting – allows to express and imagine a new future for the street. The documents produced by students are visual representations of this new future. It becomes an object of common reflection for stakeholders. By orientating the discussion towards an external object, the stakeholders often find together a new common ground for possible interactions.

Tags/ keywords: Method, Pedagogical innovation, Learning by doing.

Who can use this method/ be involved?

The engagement of students in the process is at the core of the methodology. Thus, it requires the guide of an academic partner. However, the interaction with stakeholders are crucial for creating a proper immersive learning involvement. Different types of stakeholders (e.g., citizens, NGOs, public authorities, practitioners, and other academics) could be engaged during the week in different ways, not requiring a common methodology of interaction, but adapted to their needs and capacity.

Steps

- Phase 1. Developing the content, methodology (in collaboration with outside experts and practitioners often with an artistic background) and objective of the week and recruitment of students. This phase can be done also partially in collaboration with the stakeholders.

- Phase 2. Preparation of the logistics related to the week (e.g. facilities, schedules, materials)

- Phase 3. Carrying out the pedagogical intensive week (e.g. organisation, production and documentation of the interactions)

- Phase 4. Evaluation of the process at the end of the workshop with the students and the stakeholders involved

- Phase 5. Production of a results report including documents produced by students with adaptation and contextualization.

Resources and materials required

To be adapted according to the content of the workshop and its outputs. The human resources involved in the workshop is to be assessed in accordance to the number of students. In general, there is a preference for a group of around 20 students requiring the follow-up of 3-4 tutors, while there isn't any preference with respect to the number of stakeholders involved besides students and academics. As an example, previous workshops have involved up to 15-20 participants in the week's activities in public spaces, and up to 5-10 participants in the final evaluation process.

Tips/ What to pay attention to

Students needed to be prepared beforehand regarding the interaction with citizens (and stakeholders in general). Often, they need to be closely followed up by a specialised team of tutors familiar with the context and the project.

Examples of use

On the website of the faculty of architecture of ULB a series of examples of workshops organised with students are available: https://archi.ulb.be/version-francaise/les-etudes/semaine-dinnovation-pedagogique-1

Further reading/ (re)sources

Examples of application in previous projects of LoUIsE Lab:
- Synicity JPI research project, see the produced Handbook page 81: https://www.syncity4.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Syncity-Toolbox-Handbook.pdf
- Wet bodies workshop: https://latitude-platform.eu/atelier-wet-bodies-ilot-deau-le-retour/ or http://brusseau.be/actualites/wet-bodies-in-action/