

first formulation of the modern city is function. The function for the production and reproduction of goods has led to the transformation of the modern city. City or nation is organized to follow function spatially and socially. There are many rigid and static lines drawn to follow function through space and society, even in every community. Compared with those spatial or social lines of function, the line of community is very weak and subtle. It is because that community has an ambiguous role in this functional structure of city or nation, at least in Japan. When we begin to think the relationship between community and community, city, nation, world, the existing functional structure should be considered.

I suppose that there are other kinds of lines through community and other systems. Every nation and city tends to create some identity. This may not be bad, but sometimes the identity given by the outside authority draws the lines in community and among them. For example, during the Second World War, Japanese communities have worked as bases of totalitarianism. There was a line that fenced people in a community to watch each other and created ethnic myth.

We can think of other kinds of segregating lines that tend to divide the people like gender, homelessness, disability or other issues. These lines also exist in communities and between communities, cities and nations. They can be ugly. I think this is also the evidence of community's natural character. But once these lines rage outside of community throughout a nation, we, at least Japanese community designers, do not have any strategies or tools to deal with them. Along with functional lines, these cultural lines also constitute nations and the world. The former tends to eliminate any meanings, and later one fills the vanity hole of meaninglessness with false meanings.

We know how to fight against these lines in our field – the community. But meaningless lines and false meanings are still drawn and growing even stronger in the world today. I believe that the meaning of drawing lines in a community as community designers is to fight against and overcome these meaningless lines in order to create environmental justice in the world.

#### **I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW**

I do not know yet what new strategies should be established to overcome the obstacles we are facing. Using our skills to draw meaningful lines like nature, how could we connect communities with each other or should we make 'bigger community' with communities? I think I have grasped the meaning of the lines we draw, and I am wondering how this meaning could extend to the world.

## **MAKING THE INVISIBILITY OF THE URBAN COLLECTIVE MEMORIES VISIBLE**

### **Participatory Design Process as a Form Making Urban Landscape and the Positioning of the Participatory Designer**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

In an urban development project in Taipei, a new shopping mall is proposed on an old paper mill site, yet the residues of the unresolved labor/capitalist conflict continued and the design of the park became a symbolic battle for urban cultural production—a series of questions followed: who has the right to interpret the workers' past? Can illusive collective memories of individual groups be made concrete in a Taipei urban landscape through a culturing process such as participatory design? The answers were looked for in a series of participatory workshops where various constituencies came and participated in the design of the Labor Cultural Park. While paper mill workers have stories, even written text of the autobiography, the task of transforming the written and verbal text into visual text, to convince the city that workers' past can be represented in the design of the park, presents a challenge for participatory designers. Images of the park, plan and model would be completed and compared side by side with the landscape designer hired by the developer in the planning meeting. In the labor participatory design workshop, labor workers and students went through some definitive processes: listening, sharing, returning to the site, mock-up and making the model. The workshop became a process of searching, exchanging ideas, producing designs, and finally transforming voices of wound/trauma into landscape. The participatory design process became a setting which empowered those involved. This paper ends with a series of questions on the role and positioning of design in the urban social movement. Is participatory design a form of strategy or final concretization of collective memories? Ultimately, as design professionals, how do we maintain our subjectivity, searching for new answers through design problems and at the same time igniting the engine for social change.

## THE SEARCH FOR COLLECTIVE URBAN MEMORIES, EVEN IN THE SHOPPING MALL

As the rise of the consumer oriented lifestyle permeates our everyday life of urban living through various media, the forces of capitalism and culture seem to concretize into spatial culture forms, such as cafés, bookstores and flagship boutiques. They are all housed in a new building type—the shopping mall in the global city. Echoed by Rem Koolhaas, who maintained that shopping is the prevailing urban experience in today's urban environment, the newly generated building type, the mall, would also invade airports and museums, railroad stations and schools (2002). In other words, it is not just the commercial space being commodified, there seems to be little differentiation between public and commercial space. The dominating "barcode" landscape has become the everyday urban scene of Taipei, supporting it through a capitalist world economy through the branding of public space. Through the capitalistic logic of commodification and homogeneity of brandscape, the shopping mall as a building type and phenomena of 'mallification' have become the archetype of the capitalistic city and common logic in planning the Asian city. As the center of the financial and cultural capital, malling the city gave Taipei the look of a first world city: from the unveiling of the tallest building in the world, to the exotic arcade street, the spectacles of the shopping mall have also represented the image of urban progress which parallels the appearance of the global city, confirming the status of the internationalization of Taipei.

From the financial center to cultures of urban upper-middle class lifestyles, the shopping mall is the microcosm of urban living, through the manifestation of urban leisure in the space of private economy. Ultimately, the appearance of the publicness is only the appearance of consumption space. Ironically, the civility can only be expressed as simulacrum of prop display – expressed through the reinforcement of images of family values, individual lifestyle choice, or the metropolitan identity, which operates as a façade to serve the economy of global-capital and local corporate capital—this is best theorized by the figure based on Mike Douglass' framework in which the civil society, state and private economy are the key triangulation in the formation of the public sphere of Pacific Asia. In the case of Taipei, the strong emphasis of the private economy, with strong support by the state, as well as the local government seems to support the construction of consumption space. Civil society is greatly off balance, not to mention the obsolete inquiry of the public sphere in the urban environment. Yet the seamless cooperation between capital and culture has formulated a web of culturing of late logic of capitalism in which the opportunity to seek the public sphere in urban space became available, reachable through the spatial cultural form of globalized consumption space, only in appearance.

## Appearance of Public Space and Disappearance of Public Idea

Public space in shopping malls, with names like square, park, plaza has been widely used in all the open spaces of the Taipei shopping malls. Similar to the Prada flagship boutique in New York, Rem Koolhaas has noted the concept of the public plaza as site of the public forum where one can sit and communicate. His anti-flagship boutique is to combine shopping with public space for more cultural pursuits. 'Public space' has become a display of the sight of civil society and has been internalized into an architectural concept and standardized forms. This is what John Hannigan regarded as 'pseudo public space' or 'virtual privatization of the public.' In this paper, I would argue that the planning phase where public voices can be heard through different constituencies, is where public space and ideas can be generated. The urban design phase is crucial, contested terrain for designers, where public debate regarding how urban public design spaces should be negotiated even at the design level. Through one empirical case of the mills into mall in Taipei, the role the participatory design process played, "reenact and recreate the past," and at the same time allow the representational mode for the labor workers who otherwise lost a voice in the private development project, could speak and participate in the culture of design. This happens during the planning of the shopping mall in which the stories regarding Taipei's urban past are sought after, discovered and represented.

## Searching And Making Collective Memories Visible In Urban Design And Planning Process

*"...the past is a social construction mainly, shaped by the concerns for the present."*

*"collective memory was rooted in concrete social experience and associated with spatial and temporal frameworks. Memories were recalled by time periods, by recollecting the places visited and by situating ideas or images in patterns of thought belonging to specific social groups. Memory was essentially social—based on lived experience—the activity of recollection must be based on spatial reconstruction."*

## Halbwachs on Collective Memories

According to sociologist Halbwach who defined collective memories to be "selective, socially constructed, contained spatiality—a society's memory is reconstruction of past" (Halbwachs, 1992; p 33). This means the reality of the past would sharply differ from the working class construction of reality which would differ from those of their middle-class counterparts. The different versions of the storyline about the paper mills through different agents, instead of the developer's version through presentational drawings of the architect or landscape architect, was and should be public process—the

urban design phase ultimately is the field of play for defining the civic spaces. Presentation can thus become media of visions and tools of interpretation where memories can be discovered and the past can be reenacted, recreated and challenged. Thus even shopping malls can be voiced by various constituencies. In this particular case, the worker collectively rejects the plan of the architect's proposal as an ideological 'happy ever after image' of the circular disk, instead, intending to propose a different vision of their past through their collective memories. Yet such memories are chaotic, though order is there.

The participation workshop which served as a coming together of the workers to recreate the past through imaginative reenactment that would otherwise slowly disappear in the haze of time. Through the organization of the participatory workshop: from chaotic fragment storytelling, diverse points of view, to final return to the mills for site visits and clarification and design choice. What is envisioned is the future of the public/civic space in the supposed commodified dominated urban development.

### **From Site of Production to Sight of Consumption—Transformation of Taipei Society: A case of Shi-Lin Paper Mill to Sunshine Mall**

*"The story is one of the oldest forms of communication. It does not aim at transmitting the pure in-itself or even (as information does) but anchors the event in the life of the person reporting, in order to pass it on as experience to those listening."* ("Über einige Movie bei Baudelaire," I. p. 611)

*From here on, I will use the tone of storytelling to narrate the formation and process of this collaboration, which is still ongoing; in no way am I presenting an objective point of view, but take a different route in search of public and alternative positioning of design.*

This is a classic story of the conflict between labor and capital.

On the last day of the paper mills, no information about their future was told. They found out they were laid-off, the day before the factory closed, they never knew that they would not be able to return to the place where they worked for 30 years.

In November of 2001, the smokestack was taken down; this contradicted the earlier decision made in the land use changes from industrial use to commercial use where three historical elements are to be kept, namely: the brick wall, the smokestack and the CEO circular-shaped room as part of the urban planning negotiation with the Taipei City planning department in exchange for more benefits. After the first planning phase passed, however, the developer took down the smokestack for safety reasons.

Yet it is clearly in violation of the planning committee's draft order. The destruction of the smokestack symbolizes something different for different people who are involved: for the ex-laborers, it meant *"losing an old friend."*

### **Insurgent Space—Demonstration in front of Taipei City Hall**

The union demonstrated in front of Taipei City Hall in February 2002, which was the first time for many of these workers. The ex-laborers became actors in a play, acting out the importance of the smokestack and the inhumanity of the Shi-Lin paper mills. The Shi-lin paper union was not a political union. It previously functioned as an organization for leisure events for the workers in the mills, and was responsible for staging the dramatic play for the planning ordinance violation of the paper mills (now called the Sunshine Development). In front of the city hall, the workers were protecting something ephemeral such as their memories, on the future site of shopping mall.

By acting out *publicly*, it is significant that people are acting out what is hidden in the planning process, ordinances which are never followed, laws that could be easily tampered with. At the same time, the act illustrated that the private development project in Taipei should have public and transparent processes which allow public participation. Stepping in the unfamiliar territory, by fighting for the resurrection of the smokestack has brought them into the Taipei urban planning process. *"We want the smokestacks to be put back up, just for memory,"* one worker sighed.

There were scarcely any pictures or documents, so with help from the Labor Bureau, and partners, they used the only things they had left—their memories of the past, and began to tell stories of the factory, from the event which described their working conditions, to the production, and reproduction process, in order to testify that their memories of the place are just as legitimate as the boss' version. It was clear that to go beyond protest, they needed to interpret their labor cultural park on their own.

### **In the Name of the Public**

Time and time again, in the public hearings of the shopping mall redevelopment project, they fought standard practice by showing photos of job related injuries, in trying to establish their legitimacy and getting their voice heard to tell different versions about the mills. They were literally pushed aside in the urban redevelopment project.

The Sunshine Real Estate Redevelopment has already been in the planning process for at least 8 years. Time was spent on transforming the land use from the industrial site to the commercial use—the usual capitalistic logic where the consumption value outweighs the production value of the site. There seems to be an oversight that allows private development

to beat the complete disposal of the real estate developer's fantasy. Specifically, the fate of public space donated in exchange for zoning variance nevertheless remains in private interest. Behind closed doors, the donation to the city, often becomes a formality or acts as meat on the bargaining table between the city and developers.

The urban design plan for the shopping mall went through various schemes, from high rise design by a Japanese architect which would totally destroy the existing factory to a finalized scheme headed by an American designer who just completed the infamous *Shin-tien-di* (The New World, a redevelopment project which successfully combined a traditional Shanghai colonial stone house and a new outdoor shopping center.) The architect, Ben Woods, after seeing an old photograph of the mills, decided to keep all the "old stuff" and even reinvented the old scheme to be the major design concept of the shopping mall.

### **Architect's Version of the Past—One Conceptual Idea**

By March 2003, the final conceptual scheme of the shopping mall went into the planning phase – not only was the old brick wall kept, but the smokestack was also to be rebuilt as the symbol of the industrial era of Taipei City, represented in the mall.

In March, Ben Woods came up with a design scheme he referred to as the reinterpretation of *tradition, modernity and nature* by breaking down the development neatly into three pieces. Dissatisfied with the traditional shopping mall of the inward orientated circulation and viewpoints, he wanted to recreate the experience of strolling in the night market where wondering and seeing is part of the shopping experience. The site was divided into three parts: traditional is the old part of paper mills, including the resurrection of the smoke stack; brick wall, and seismic sounded old structures as the traditional ambience; and the modern, a seven storey shopping mall was to mimic the industrial look by using new material to interpret the industrial look of today, and finally the community park symbolizing nature would tie the whole project together. While in three distinct pieces, the architect tried to create physical as well as visual penetration in which there is always opportunity to see from one place to the other. The idea of looking outward was important, where there are opportunities to view the past in nature and the chance to stand in front of the modern factory and turn around to see "tradition".

### **Participatory Design in Urban Planning Process—Allow Different Narratives or Interpret Stories About the Urban Past**

After the "tradition, modernity and nature" scheme finally went through the planning phase, it was important that the union come up with an alternative plan for the Labor Park. After

the rejection of the conceptual park design provided by the designer, the participation workshops were organized as a forum to tell stories and to listen to the stories. The rejected scheme was essentially a disk-like shape which symbolized the "union between labor and capital," engraved with "we are all family" for the labor memorial aspects by working with the paper mills workers. Collaborating with university architecture students, the workers, with the help of students, envisioned the future of the park as well as the recollection of past memories of the mills, involving activities, such as returning to the mills to make the mock up of the missing object, like the smokestack or the water reservoir. The spatial history of the mills was constructed.

### **Public Histories: The Life Story of the Young Girl**

In the essay "Claiming Women's History in the Urban Landscape," Dolores Hayden demonstrates a powerful case in which "the stories of diverse working women can be inscribed in public space, as a way of creating a public, political culture which carries the American city into the future" and that "in the stories of the working women can lie the history of urban space and its public meanings" (Hayden, 1995; 354, 369).

I went into the workers' oral history workshop conducted by the Labor Bureau and the Union, and heard a most amazing story from the paper mill's sixty year-old female worker. Prior to this I was conducting a design studio investigating the Shi-lin paper mills. It was on the verge of being just another hypothetical shopping mall space design.

It is really not what she said, but how she said it that moved me, for I have read the book compiled from the oral story and came only to 'get more information.' Apparently shy in front of the public, she knew specific information like, the date she started working in the factory, the date and events when she left her job—the story of the paper mill is also the life story of a girl's life. I think I was haunted by her specific details, as to the dates, places and events and most importantly her pain and happiness as she won prizes for the best worker. Both her physical pain from the job, and the betrayals for her 30 years of loyalty to the company were expressed not through words of hatred, but rather a melancholic tone of comprehension of her life in the factory. The one anecdote told regards her role as a working mom, in which she describes the guardroom as a place away from the public-ness and separate from the outsider. The guardroom is also the earlier form of the breast-feeding room. The story provides dimensions which are more than spatial, but involve the complexity of history, gender, and the life of the blue collar working class. It was the first time the factory space of the past came to life, through narration of the spatial story.



Figure 1. One of the first sessions, the workers divided into groups and discussed their working environment. Some tried to sketch what they remembered about the space.



Figure 2. Workers returning to the paper mills, for the first time since the layoff, and begin to mock-up the scale of the reservoir, with red tape.

### Proposing Alternatives: on the Other Side of the Table

During the participatory design workshop, an invitation was extended to the landscape architect who was to design the Labor Park, in order to listen to ex-paper mill workers' side of story. In one of the earlier workshops, the groups were divided into three: production, reproduction (leisure) and labor injury—things that workers specifically want to be remembered by. The information out of that workshop was formulated into the program of the park. Yet after three hours of brainstorming sessions, rather than jotting down the information and asking questions to clarify the story, the architect later complained and continued to speak as the 'professional' as to what a park has to be like without listening to their side of story.

"They are just telling a whole bunch of stories, it is just a park."—landscape architect

"They are not the only workers; these are just opinions of the few."—ex-owner and representative of the paper mills

The designer, who supposedly has the instinct and insight of translating abstract feelings into forms, did not realize the stories are the irreplaceable design theme and the possible channel into the past had he listened. During the workshop, in the most efficient manner, the landscape designer promptly provided solutions for the park, after 'listening to the story.' He came up with the design guidelines, in sketches and verbal descriptions:

*The pathway is straight which represents the rationality of the factory.*

*The use of material on the pavement would use all materials from the site.*

*The light represents fire.*

*The chair was set up so workers can sit down and think about their past.*

*Landscape and flowers represent feeling and hardship.*

There was no contest as to who has the capacity to imagine the future of the urban landscape. The spatial history is there, but no one *is listening*.

### Positioning and Roles: A Possible Alternative Role of Cultural Making

Even in urban social movements, mostly in the protest phase, designers are often absent or design skills are hidden, since designers' have long been trained in the making of a product, rather than making culture, since the product is often to provide services to capitalists. From this experience, I view participatory design as strategic as well as a force for the concrete design of the urban future, the latter is equally empowering, compared to the legislative theater and the like. If the desire to create places



Figure 3. Workers came to studio, describing in detail the assembly line and at the same time, listening to some of the schematic design idea presented by students.

can be a core value, the motive for urban social movements can move beyond the discursive and return to the real space—this in turn would allow insurgent space to become civic spaces or spaces of civility. As a strategy to gain momentum to participate for urban futures, to show voices of the workers can be heard in the planning process, information which would not have been acquired through the conventional design process, since most information and sources are often secondary and biased, are being re-examined in the process of the workshop. The difference between the conventional designer and participatory designer is related to the question of why we design and whom we should design for. Skill at representation has long been at the core of professional education, through mastering traditional representation media such as drawings, and now computer animation, and video imaging. These tools are utilized only so the war can be fought against the construction of a capitalistic city and maybe at times the game can be won. Professional design competition seems to be limited to the mastery of the tools and chooses to leave the subjectivity of what they represent to the client. Conventional designers seem to leave the positioning outside of the profession. The limitation of the design profession, limited by capitalistic operation, by division of labor, by taste dictated through class, has made "a park for the next generation" almost impossible. Appearing only in the real estate advertisement, the future vision of the park had not been a major concern of the labor union. Instead, the worker surprised us all by showing how their memories are to be represented and how their experience can become the blueprint for the future park in which people would one day stroll and experience their memories. Meanwhile, to make change, and alter the status quo is the major concern of the union leadership—which views the participation as a strategy, a negotiation process, the right to interpret their culture in challenging the status quo which would also slow down the process to ask for more—from symbolic to the material form of the urban landscape.

The participation workshop is not only the site of urban negotiation, but a possible site where healing, remembering, and forgetting, where human conditions are searched for and revealed. Throughout the process, the workers have transformed the most negative comments regarding their unjust treatment, to finally focusing their energy on remembering the past, and the road to envisioning the future is a concrete and optimistic one, at least for moments in the workshop.

Meanwhile the developers have also initiated a similar participation workshop by inviting different groups of the workers to discuss what they want, and it is operated more to offset the legitimacy of this workshop. The pseudo, but formally recorded workshop, is easily detected since the question-answer format is only to serve the interest of the developer. While participation workshops can be a formality or political

strategy, the process of searching, perhaps for democracy, for social justice, or collective memories can only be examined in the minutes of the workshop.

While in the participation workshop, everyone enters with specific goals and ideological assumptions, but at the end, their positions have shifted. In the end, workers begin speaking eloquently about the design of the future park, not as information or opinion providers, but how they can experience the space through the students' schemes, as to how design can be improved. At times, it was not clear who was the professor, who the students, and who the workers.

Union workers have played different roles in city design, from passive to active: from the labor movement in staging the protest of the insurgent space to participating in the participatory design session in order to produce real civic space. The workshop is significant in that the attempt to create change through representation, provide possible light in the new possible role of design in urban process and finding new meanings in the role of design as a plausible tool for urban change, both materially and symbolically.

Participatory design process can be both a process of collaboration and contestation. Any urban public space is an opportunity to search for urban meanings: whose memories are to be stored, and how can participatory designers facilitate such voices, especially the weak ones? Participatory design workshops provide the chance to tell the story and turn the story into representation that people can continue to imagine. While design often plays the role of cosmetic effect, which masks the capitalistic scheme of commodifying space; as a tool, it is time to serve something else—in representing people's values and interpreting what is civil society to illuminate the city's unspoken or unseen so it becomes visible, audible and meaningful for us all.

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