

MATZU PARTICIPATORY DESIGN STUDIO

How Does the Outside Professional Gain Understanding of the Inside Story in the Local Community?

John K-C. Liu, Hsing-rong Liu and Shenglin Chang

ABSTRACT

Matzu Islands, named after the goddess Matzu, are a minor archipelago of 19 islands and islets in the Taiwan Strait administered as Matzu County by Taiwan government. In 2003, the nine-thousand permanent residents mostly reside in the five major islands: Peikan, Nankan, Tungyin, Tungchuan, and Sichuan. Due to the geographical location, 8 miles off the coast of mainland China in Taiwan Strait, Matzu Islands, as well as Chinmen Islands, had been known as the most important military sites for Taiwanese troops who carried on the Chiang Kai-shek's impossible mission of re-conquest of Mainland China after the 1949 Chinese Civil War. During the Cold War years, soldier and military related outsiders contributed to large numbers of temporary population that fostered a versatile local economy for Matzu Islands. In the late 1990s, the hostile relationship between China and Taiwan gradually transformed into a business-first attitude, because many Taiwanese business owners have transplanted their companies, shops, and factories to China since the late 1980s. In the dawn of the 21st Century, the Taiwanese government withdrew the majority of the troops in Matzu Islands, and initiated the so-called "small three links," that allow trade, mail and people to cross the small stretch of water between Taiwan's Chinmen and Matzu counties and China's Fujian Province. This friendly action between the China and Taiwan governments has dramatically impacted Matzu Islands' military-based economy. Large numbers of troop outsiders departed from Matzu Islands, while many secret military sites were left abandoned. The total population, therefore, dropped noticeably from 17,088 in 1971, to 8,773 in 2003. Under this circumstance, in 2002, the Matzu County government sought outside expertise to transform its local economy from military based one into an eco-tourism one. In this paper we will use the case of Matzu in Taiwan to illustrate some of the issues that we are concerned with. In the case of Matzu, we have continued to refine our participatory approach to planning in

response to some of the questions raised above. Many of the complications, contradictions, and dilemmas in cross-cultural communication and cross-boundary planning are apparent in tourism planning. In this paper we focus on three general questions to be answered, hopefully to generate a discussion and cross analysis with other similar case studies. We re-state these questions:

- 1) How do we understand the problems that people face when they have to deal with unfamiliar and foreign environments?
- 2) How do we set goals and objectives when we help people face the above problems?
- 3) How do we engage people (participation) in making plans and designs for future environments that will help to resolve problems that people face?

The task of the humanist is not just to occupy a position or place, nor simply to belong somewhere, but rather to be both insider and outsider to the circulating ideas and values that are at issue in our society or the society of the other. –Said, 2004, 76

BACKGROUND

In the Fall of 2003, the Ministry of Education in Taiwan commissioned the Graduate Institute of Building and Planning at the National Taiwan University (NTU) to conduct a research project aimed at reforming the existing design studio curriculum at professional schools of design in Taiwan. This research effort is a part of a larger project to understand the nature and substance of "Creative Learning." Thus, within the general scope of Creative Learning, we identified two main issues of "creativity" and "participation." With these two issues in mind, we solicited four other schools of design besides NTU to collaborate on this research. They are Tamkang University, Chung Yuan University, Hua-fang University, and Shi-jien University.

A professor at each university conducted a studio course within the standard design curriculum. Students ranged from first-year undergraduates to first and second year graduates. They included students within the mainstream professional design majors of planning, architecture, landscape architecture and interior design. But they also included students from other disciplines, mainly at NTU, such as sociology, history, geography, etc.

The physical context for this design exercise is set in Matzu, which consists of five small islands off the China Mainland near the city of Fuzhou. Each team from the five schools is assigned to one of the five islands, and a town or a village is selected as the site for conducting the participatory design. The studios took place during the Spring semester of 2004.

To date, the teams have completed the work for the year and have separately prepared final reports. A final dialogue and exchange of experiences have been conducted with the aim of extracting common features in dealing with the issues of “creativity” and “participation,” as well as identifying differences and divergent views about methods and processes. A review and evaluation of this project is being prepared for the Ministry of Education separately and apart from this discussion.

In this paper, we focus exclusively on the work of the NTU studio that involved six graduate students on the island of Dong-ju. For the writing of this paper, we rely heavily on students’ records and notes as basic information on what actually took place. The instructors of the course, John K.C. Liu and Hsing-rong Liu, while knowledgeable and with previous working experience on this island, only participated one time each on site with the students. The third author of this piece, Shenglin Chang, visited the island during the summer of 2003, and is sensitive to the environmental and social issues on the island. In part two she provides an independent review view of the issues that we tried to deal with.

The Working Group

The core of the outside professional group, in this case, is the six-member student team. Their status and respective background disciplines are as follows:

- Li Yen-ru, female, 2nd year grad, geography
- Wang Chi-fang, female, 1st year grad, landscape architecture
- Huang Chun-hui, female, 1st year grad, architecture
- Deng Jia-ling, female, 2nd year grad, sociology
- Zuo Xiang-ju, male, 2nd year grad, civil engineering
- Xu Wen-juan, female, 1st year grad, history/journalism

When they first signed up for the studio class, their understanding of the course was primarily on using a real community context to study how to conduct a participatory design process. Their understanding of what is participatory design was based on some previous experience and on limited knowledge regarding community design and participation received through reading and lectures.

Besides the six students, there are several other students from the third year class who had worked on the island on another project last summer. They were interested enough to continue their involvement in this project serving as friendly and helpful elder students who would provide necessary assistance and introduction to the community.

In order for the group to work as a team, several sessions were conducted to introduce the team to the environment, the community, the design task, as well as possible methods of working together. The students were made to be aware that they have to share and work together based on each person’s professional strengths, and to help cover each

other’s weaknesses. They further understood that, once in the community, they had to develop ways and means of involving the community residents in not only providing information, but also in the actual participation of the planning and design work.

The Assignment

There are three steps to the assignment as given to the students:

Step 1: Together with the residents of the island, develop a description of the local distinctiveness of place. This is phrased in terms such as unique qualities, specificity, special features, etc. The distinctiveness may be related to space, but it may also involve qualities that are non-physical. But we aim to focus on those qualities that come about as the result of people-environment interaction. Going into the community, the outside group had to figure out a way to involve the local residents in identifying these qualities.

Step 2: Determine, again with the input of the community, what is of real concern to the community, whether it’s a problem waiting to be resolved, or a collective aspiration to do something in the community. Again, we leave the question open-ended as to whether it is a space problem or not, as long as it is an authentic/real problem that exists in the community.

Step 3: Develop a method for involving the residents in actually participating in finding the most appropriate answer to the problem as identified. And then carry it out. The result should be a plan, a design, or an actual action, which originates in the distinctive qualities of the place, extends to an understanding of a real problem, and then is resolved by a participatory design process.

The group then proceeded to outline a 16-week work plan in accordance with the above assignment.

THE COMMUNITY

Unlike the two main islands, (north) Bei-gan and (south) Nan-gan, which have more people, more villages, and more commerce, and unlike Dong-yin further to the north with its own connection to the mainland, the two islands of (east) Dong-ju and (west) Xi-ju are the most remote and least accessible of the islands in Matsu. As such, people here are even more placid and resigned, accepting whatever changes that might occur and going about their daily routines, making necessary adjustments without fanfare.

Thus, when the soldiers began to leave a few years ago, with the receding cold war between Taiwan and Mainland China, the local population began to dwindle as well since a large part of the local economy is based on serving the needs of the military.

Thirty years ago, there were several thousand residents and over ten thousand soldiers. But today, there are just a few hundred people left and less than two thousand soldiers. During the past several decades, peoples' livelihoods have already changed from harvesting one of the richest fishing grounds on the East Asia coast to that of providing services to the soldiers stationed on these islands after World War II. For the residents of Matzu, fishing is associated with their parents and grandparents, with stories told and history recorded. What took their place were barbershops and laundry stores, public bathhouses and video game parlors, grocery stores and Internet cafes.

At the height of military build-up, soldiers outnumbered local residents by ten to one. Business was thriving, and the work was much easier with greater economic return. During this period, real wealth was accumulated reflected in one of the highest personal savings rates in Taiwan, in a high real-estate ownership rate, and in the large percentage of young people now living in Taiwan.

With the rapid decline of military personnel, however, people must contemplate the future. True, some have already packed up and followed their young and their real-estate holdings to Taiwan or to the Mainland, but many have remained. Even with just a few soldiers lingering around, video-game parlors and barbershops are still in business. Particularly on the island of Dong-ju, the pace remains steady and calm, unhurried and somewhat oblivious. Old people continue to chat their hot afternoon away on favorite breezy spots, while a few kids still endlessly run around the alley ways with gusto. Underneath, people are asking the inevitable questions: stay or not stay, Taiwan or Mainland, country or city. Of course these questions seem perennial not only to Matzu, but to Taiwan as a whole. Yet, here on the remotest of these remote islands, such concerns reflect a brewing anxiety about one's essential connection to place. And it may be here that we as outsiders can best grasp the meaning of local distinctiveness through the resolution of this anxious contemplation of the future.

The Environment as Setting

Dong-ju is a small island, about 2 1/2 km long and 1 1/2 km wide. Similar to the other islands of Matzu, Dong-ju is a rocky outcropping among the many islands that dot the East China Sea close to the coast of the Mainland. There is scarce vegetation on the rocky surface, and it was not until the soldiers came fifty years ago that wind-breaker trees were planted to provide a green cover to the barren hills. Because of the rocky formation of the islands, there are many small coves which give dramatic views along the coast. The island of Dong-ju is the southern most of the Matzu islands. It is less steep than the other islands and has a gentle valley in the middle. Partly because of this land formation, a village settlement called Da-

ping, formed in the valley next to a gradually sloping valley which became the farming plots for the village residents. This form of settlement is unique among the islands as all other villages are fishing settlements along a cove on the coast.

Da-ping plays a very crucial role in defining the character of Dong-ju island. There are two other villages on Dong-ju, one is the northern village of Fu-jeng which sits facing a crescent tidal beach rich in varieties of shell fish, and the other is a now abandoned fishing and trading village of Da-pu on the south shore. Da-pu, being one of the closest fishing ports to the Mainland, served also as a trading port for various merchandise such as tea and herbs. The village of austere stone houses sits on a high bluff overlooking the steep and narrow cove below. It is facing south so that it is protected from the cold winter winds from the north, but catches the summer breezes from the south. Because of their respective characteristics in relationship to the landscape, both Fu-cheng and Da-pu have been designated as historic settlements by the local government.

A special feature of the man-made landscape is a British built lighthouse at the northern tip of the island overlooking the village of Fu-jeng. It was built over a hundred years ago by the British to direct the fleets of ships going in and out of the Port of Fuzhou which was one of the treaty ports during the late Ching Dynasty. A large portion of the Chinese tea bound for Britain during this period came through this sea route by Dong-ju Island. The lighthouse is now a major tourist attraction.

Aside from these features, what is equally significant, but less visible, are the military constructions on the island in the form of tunnels dug deep into the rocky cliffs forming a network of underground circulation systems, dramatic unto itself, but otherwise non-visible. Much of this military installation is now abandoned awaiting a new discovery of its use and significance.

THE FIRST STEP: HOW TO UNDERSTAND DONG-JU

The students set a goal of trying to understand Dong-ju as the first task in answering the question of local distinctiveness. In order to know Dong-ju, both from the point of view of the outsider and from the local residents' point of view, it was agreed that a way of combining the role of participant observer with in-depth interviews would be the most appropriate way of gaining access to the residents. The first night in the community, we held a get together to meet the residents. The six students introduced our intent and then individually paired up with members of the community. For the next several days, each student became a shadow to a resident. For example, Xiang-ju, the only male student who is tall, longhaired and somewhat shy, was paired with an elder woman in her fifties. He helped her with her daily chores, and along the way they talked. In answering his questions, she would take him to places that are special to her, such as a spot where she goes to pick wild green

onion. By staying close to her for a period of time, he began to see the place through her eyes and her feelings. These are noted down and the six students discussed and consolidated their findings.

Initially, this method of trying to understand place from the view of the residents resulted in the identification of several space-related characteristics. These are briefly: 1) A newly paved road that led from Da-ping to Fu-jeng which is unpleasant as a walking experience so that people prefer to drive. 2) A covered alleyway where it is shady, cool and breezy with a view in all directions. It is a very good place to gather and have conversations in the afternoon with neighbors. 3) In front of the tofu shop where there is a large flat surface with a long view, a good place for people to gather in the evening. 4) The vegetable garden which is a tiered area with small plots for people to grow their own vegetables. From the main road in the village that curves around the garden, people can see each other coming and going. 5) The tides that change everyday which determines the daily routines and living patterns of the island residents. People are profoundly affected by the daily and seasonal changes in the tide actions. 6) People have a habit of strolling with the whole family in the evening after supper from the village of Da-ping along the main road that bends around the vegetable garden and then down to the pier where boats to the other islands are docked. This road is the favorite of the residents.

From these spatial characteristics, an attempt is then made to identify the “specialness” or “uniqueness” of Dong-ju by making individual mental maps. These maps try to record and relate all information gathered through the participant observations and the in-depth interviews. With these, the students held intensive sessions to discuss all of these maps again consolidating them into identifiable spatial characteristics. This time the list grew to twenty-four items with more specific details. The students further grouped these into categories including those dealing with the island as a whole, such as this island is friendlier and more conducive to walking, community information is passed on mostly by face-to-face contact, etc. Other categories include the ecology and geography of the island, military space, landform and man-made form, such as stepped pathways throughout the village, the different types of employment on the island, and what do people do for recreation on the island.

After several rounds of working on the spatial characteristics, the group became aware not only of the spatial attributes, but also the degree to which one knows and understands a space may be quite different from others. Thus in order to construct a collective mental map of the island, one has to begin to fully engage the other so as to reach a common view. Based on this, the second time the group went into the community, they attempted to construct a collective mental map working with

the kids in the village. In the main covered plaza at Da-ping, kids participated in making a large joint map showing their conception of the island as a place.

What was learned from this exercise?

1. Distinctiveness of place is not necessarily spatial. Some unique characteristics may be just interpersonal relationships such as the passing of information. But quite often, specialness and uniqueness do have spatial boundaries.
2. Constructing a collective mental map of distinctiveness tends to focus more on what people have in agreement rather than differences. Differences and varying perspectives are harder to deal with than agreements. Thus, a mental map shows only the common views and not the differences. Then there is a question regarding whether “specialness” is the same as “uniqueness.” The uniqueness of place may not be the same as what is special about a place. What’s special has more to do with the individual. What’s unique is more related to how it is compared to other places. When we seek local distinctiveness, we look for what is special about place to a group of people, the local residents. The outsider may tend to focus on uniqueness, but the resident may be more concerned about specialness.
3. Besides using mental maps, there may be other ways to present specialness. Often, mental maps which show unique characteristics become tourist guide maps which identify points of interests to the tourist, but which may have little meaning to the local residents. Again, how the residents view a place and how the outsiders view the place may be quite different.
4. Due to the limitations of mental maps, some interesting and potential important observations are lost. This is perhaps due to the method of drawing mental maps which tends to focus on the easily identifiable parts and avoids those that do not necessarily have a clear spatial dimension, such as recycling and disposal of waste materials.
5. By working only with kids on constructing the collective mental map, the focus shifted to young people’s perspectives. This is a departure from the initial entry into the community when each shadowed one resident for a length of time. The mental map did not account for the previous results. For example, how people feel about the two roads, one from Da-ping to Fu-jeng, and the other from Da-ping down to the pier, does not show up in the mental map. This important understanding is lost.

THE SECOND STEP: SEEKING AN AUTHENTIC/REAL PROBLEM

Having gone through an effort to understand the distinctiveness of Dong-ju, the idea is that the outsider begins to understand

the place through the eyes of the local residents, or at least the distance between the outsider and the local is shortened, and thereby we may be more able to see what kind of problems exist in the community that need resolution. Too often, outside professionals go into a community and assume a certain problem is waiting for an answer. For planners and designers, we commonly assume the problem is a space-related one, for example, a building, a park, a garden, a plaza, etc. In this case, as mentioned earlier, the effort to uncover local distinctiveness focused largely on space-related issues even though some were not necessarily space related. For the students from different backgrounds, this was continually a cause for concern, whether space is the basis or whether the issue is the basis.

Thus when the group began the second step of trying to identify a problem, this concern became paramount. What the students felt, based on the previous step, is that while it may be possible to work with the residents in identifying important local distinctiveness, they could not determine any immediate space-related problem that needed to be dealt with. Yet, on the other hand, there was a sense of pending crisis brewing underneath the surface. This potential crisis is an economic one related to the rapidly declining numbers of soldiers on the island. What will the people do when all the soldiers leave. Will they also abandon this island or is there a possible new life for the island in attracting tourists and visitors. Some of the local leaders including teachers who have long been concerned with thinking about the future see this crisis as one of complacency among the residents towards the future. They do not have a vision for the future and do not care to think about collective and public issues regarding the future of the island.

Based on this understanding, the team sought to identify issues that are clearly related to the future and that which would activate the residents in participating. In the next visit to the community, four main issues grew out of an intensive round of interaction with the residents.

Issue 1

The recovery of an old pathway from Da-ping to Da-pu, a distance of perhaps 500 m, is considered an opportunity to both reconstruct the history of the island as well as to provide substance and interest for educational and eco-tourism for the future. This path had been abandoned and overgrown due to the construction of a new road a generation ago, so that young people have no knowledge of it and old people sometimes block their memories due to hardships suffered in the old times. Revealing the pathway by a community work project to clear the overgrown vegetation, the act attracted the interest of the community in different ways. Children and young people were positively attracted to it while some old people joined in. Others, however, remained aloof and detached, watching with curiosity but not joining in the work. As a concrete event that took place,

and as an issue dealing with how people might see the future of this island, the recovery of the old pathway clearly could serve as a focus to initiate and activate participation. Whether the action is directed towards the repair and reconstruction of the pathway, or whether it might be an oral history project with the older people, or whether it involves a study of the native plants along the path, these are all possibilities to generate some thinking about the future.

Issue 2

In the village of Fu-jeng, located towards the upper part below the lighthouse is an old abandoned house that was once a private school in the village. Many residents remember with fondness the time when it was a school. Having been a school and now being vacant, there is history and memory associated with the structure. People in the community have talked about renovating the house and giving it a new use, such as a history museum, a center for the study of marine biology focused on the abundant shell life on the cove below, and another kind of school such as a study camp or a site for holding workshops and training sessions. However, these ideas tend to remain what the public or the government can do with this structure, rather than what the community can do to create a use. While its historic meaning seems apparent, people's enthusiasm towards this issue remains questionable.

Issue 3

During the month of March and April, an unexpected discovery of a type of fire-worm caused substantial interest on the island. Due to the clearing of a plot of land beside the main walking section of the road leading from Da-ping to the pier, many people came into contact with the lovable worm that glowed in the dark. Partly because this stretch of the road is well populated by village residents and their families, especially at dusk when the sun is setting, and as people return from their walk to the pier, they would stop and marvel at these glowing worms. As an environmental protection issue, there is strong interest among the teachers to do something. As a focus of interest for the village residents, this issue seems to be able to attract all age groups. However, there is a question whether there is enough ecological basis for pushing this issue ahead.

Issue 4

The vegetable garden next to Da-ping is of concern to many, including the elected local representative. Right now each plot is owned by individuals and cultivated without much coordination. Even though there is shared water, there is not an overall plan for treating waste and dealing with organic materials. There is also the question of fertilizer. Should they be working out a plan to develop organic gardening? Furthermore, should they be thinking about how to package their produce for the consumption of visitors and tourists? Related to the garden are

many potentially complicated issues which include ownership of the plots which may not be easily resolved. While many regard this as a real problem, in the short term, there do not seem to be enough resources to deal with it.

Several rounds of discussions later, and after actually participating in the clearing of the old pathway, the team still arrived at the decision to pursue the glow-worm issue as the most legitimate and most real of the problems. Three specific reasons were given for having made this decision. First, this phenomenon of the glow-worm has become an important aspect of daily life in the village. It is intimately connected to after-dinner strolls, to watching the sunset, and is a topic of interest for all age groups. Second, this glow-worm clearly has ecological and biological significance as a special species on this island. Its potential as an eco-education subject is obvious. Third, there is some danger right now of the grounds being disturbed, and the surrounding areas becoming a dump site for used construction materials such as large chunks of concrete with exposed reinforcing steel bars sticking out. The environment for the proper appreciation of the glow-worms needs to be planned. The team proceeded to implement a plan to deal with this issue.

STEP 3: THE PARTICIPATORY ACTION

1. To get people interested, a large cardboard model was made of the site including the road. This was placed in the middle of the outdoor plaza so that all could see it. The team continued to work on the model while getting people to come and discuss how best to deal with site. This was successful in attracting people especially the school children who got involved in making the model.
2. Gathering opinions regarding the site was not as successful as hoped. There was the problem of how to display an opinion on the model. There was also a problem when people forgot what they had said the day before, thus causing confusion over what is the actual opinion expressed. Furthermore, because the presence of the glow-worm is seasonal, only during the months of March to May, when they are no longer present, it was hard to get people to discuss it.
3. Since differing opinions could not be consolidated, it was difficult to advance collective decisions regarding the specific plan.
4. In terms of on-site construction, the effort to clear away the debris and prepare the site was rewarding with over ten people sharing in the labor of removing the concrete and steel bars from the site. That night, what was done to the site during the day was remade on the model so that people could see the changes that were taking place.
5. Following this, there was a task to find local materials that could be used to create a gathering place on the site. This

included stone, wood, plants, and other used material such as wooden cable spools. School children helped to plant flowers along the path. But due to the slow progress in involving the residents, this part of the implementation was terminated until further consolidation.

REVIEW: HOW CAN TEAM LEARNING BE AS CREATIVE AS COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION?

The purpose of the Dong-ju project is to challenge the traditional studio teaching and learning environments, and provide the substance of “creative learning” experiences for students who are taking community service learning studios. As is defined in the beginning of the paper, “creative learning” refers to “creativity” and “participation.”

How can a group of students have creative learning experiences within a community studio that handles a real project? Meanwhile, these students are not only outsiders of a community, but also learning the skills of planning, design, and engaging this community within a short period of time, i.e., a semester. This question underlines my review of the Dong-ju project. My review is based on the six final essays submitted by the National Taiwan University’s students (NTU students) at the Graduate Institute of Building and Planning (Deng, 2004; Huang, 200; Li, 2004; Wang, 200; Xu, 2004; and Zou, 2004). The student essays reflected on their personal journeys on Dong-ju Island. They analyzed the steps they went through to understand the villagers and the island, examined the ways of their decision making, and investigated the processes that they initiated to engage the villagers’ participation. Their essays answered the three questions posted in the beginning of the paper; how to understand the problems, how to set the goals, and how to engage people from individual students’ views and voices. The reflections of each essay not only echoed the work that each student engaged in and the people they encountered during the semester long process, but also the background and the training (i.e., journalism, history, architecture, landscape architecture, sociology, geography etc.) embodied even before they entered the NTU’s Building and Planning institute.

As an outsider of the Dong-ju project and a quasi-insider who graduated from the institute and has maintained a decade-long relationship with the group, my review intertwines my personal learning, teaching, and practicing experiences across Taiwan, California, and Maryland in the US. I would like to address my concerns from two viewpoints: 1) professional process: how students learn community participatory design and planning as a professional field, and 2) team-learning process: how students engage each other as professionals within community design process - listen to individual voices as well as make group decisions together. From my reading of the students’ final essays, I conclude that there is a gap between how professionals engage the community and how

professionals engage each other. I realize that the NTU students applied many creative methods within the three-step process; understanding the people and the place, setting goals, and engaging the community. They, however, confronted the challenge of how to engage their teammates in a less smooth and collaborative way within their internal studio process. Therefore, the question that concerned me the most is: how team learning can be as creative as community participation. With this question in mind, I want to address community design as a professional process first, and then return to the students' team-learning process.

1) Professional processes: how students learn community participatory design and planning as a professional field

Instead of introducing themselves as design professionals, the NTU students chose their role as anthropological researchers and friends of the Dong-ju Islanders. They went through different steps that have been listed earlier in this paper. They addressed the "shadows of residents," "children's collective mental maps," and daily event participations, as the most powerful structures to understand the place and the people from diverse views. These three methods facilitate students to reveal residents' way of life and view of the place within the residents' daily path. It more likely creates a documentary than a thematic film. Students document all the events, chats, and conversations randomly taking place when they interact with their resident-partners, children, and villagers. Information flowed with multiple layers of meanings; contradictory rather than cohesive. Confronting the confusion of their field data and the pressure of time, students were aware of the somehow "immature" judgments that they had to make for the uncertain future of Dong-ju Island. They questioned their role as outsider professionals and self-criticized the legitimacy of making these decisions for/with the Dong-ju Islanders.

The anthropological approaches that the NTU students took are very different than the positivistic methods that have been widely applied in community planning and design processes in the United States. In the US, the common ways of conducting community-based projects are based on quantitative surveys and the opinions that people express during community workshops and public hearings. Within the culture of the western democracy, the minority has to follow the majority. Therefore, numbers and percentages are critical for community decision making processes. Community professionals need to know how many percentages of people agree with certain issues in order to move the project forward. There are strengths and weaknesses of these positivistic methods, but in this section, I prefer to focus on the opportunities and challenges that the anthropological methods open up for the community design and planning profession.

In general, students declared that the anthropological methods help them understand local villagers and Dong-ju Island at a much more in-depth level than other methods might offer. For example, in Wen-juan's essay, she reported that education and health were the critical issues that concerned local residents the most, but these issues were outside the scope of the project (Xu, 2004). While the anthropological methods open up a window for students to understand local villagers ways of life, it strikes me that many students were disturbed by how to neutrally conduct their field data and objectively analyze it. Chun-hui's essay is one example. She asked, "When professionals have their own values and identities which conflict with those of local residents, how can we consider the issues with a neutral stand?" "When professionals interact with local residents, can we honestly express our feelings?" (Huang, 2004). Among all, Yen-ru suggested that, instead of believing professionals can be neutral and objective, "we should initiate the concept of inter-subjectivity" (Li, 2004). Yen-ru feels that the professionals should consider the distinctive quality of Dong-ju Island from both professionals' and local residents' points of view.

Students' responses indicate the crucial issue of how to make decisions for researchers and professionals who apply qualitative methods in their research and professional projects. While numbers are the basis for making judgments within quantitative methods, consensus building is the foundation for decision making within qualitative approaches. In the Dong-ju project, students met, discussed, and negotiated to make decisions. I would like to address this issue as my second point: team learning processes.

2) Team-learning processes: how students engage each other as a professional community within their community design processes, listen to individual voices, and make group decisions together.

Although team learning and building consensus are the critical mechanisms for the NTU team to analyze their field data and determine the future directions for Dong-ju Island, every studio educator knows that there are always problems and crisis projects based on teamwork. Among the NTU students, five out of six were unsatisfied with their group meetings and decision-making, because it seemed to be difficult for their team to build consensus. Jia-ling opened her report with the comment: "We were rather emotional than rational" (Deng, 2004). Yen-ru described the team as, "not many team members, but many problems." She highlighted, "difficult to express opinions; difficult to build consensus" (Lee, 2004). Chi-fan presented similar experiences and suggested that "Maybe we need someone who is more objective and more competent than us to participate in our discussion" (Wang, 2004)

These remarks sound so familiar, somehow like a flash back to me. As I recalled my own experience of taking community

studios at the same institute as Chi-fan, Yen-ru, and others dating back to the late 1980s, everyone in my team was often yelling and screaming at each other in our never-ending discussions. In most cases, my teams were falling apart and some teammates never showed up for the conclusion of the semester's teamwork. At that time, I also hoped that we had someone who was more skilled and talented than us to help build consensus. However, bringing in an outside authority is not always the solution, because we still do not learn how to handle our internal dynamics, listen to each others' voices, and integrate our diverse ideas.

From an educator's point of view, how to handle individual team members' personalities, personal values, professional disciplines and group dynamics has, indeed, profoundly impacted students' learning experiences. From a practitioner's experiences, these issues also interfere with the quality of the decisions that the professional team makes for the community that they work with. It is critical to cultivate innovative ways that respect team members' individuality but engage everyone together.

In Dong-ju's case, I suggested that the NTU students apply some important methods they practice with the community, within themselves. These methods might open up new windows for them to perceive each others' view points and help them to listen to each other. For example, maybe, they can be each other's shadow for a weekend and then role-play their counter part when they meet for group discussion next week. In addition to residents' cognitive maps, they can also spend some time doing similar exercises within their team. They can talk about their favorite spots on the island and how these places relate to their environmental autobiography. They can even share their personal values and attachments on the island with Dong-ju villagers. By doing so, the Dong-ju residents can understand the outside professionals' stories and view points of the island. This would facilitate the inter-subjective relationships between the local residents and the outside professionals.

To sum up, it is striking to realize that community professionals, as outsiders of a community, have developed innovative ways to understand and engage the community that they are working with. However, this group of professionals, as insiders of their team, have not found a way to understand and engage themselves within their own teamwork. The NTU students' final essays make me aware that, in most community studio environments, collaborative team learning experiences are not given and can be a struggle. It takes tremendous efforts, from both instructors and students, to nurture a culture of collaboration. It is a challenge and an opportunity.

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