

Reflective Review

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COLUMN A



Jury chairman Christoph Heinemann discloses the project offices that had been anonymously reviewed in the cooperative review process Building a Proposition for Future Activities, 5 October 2017. Photo: Marko Mijatovic for the Research and Teaching Program Urban Design. CC BY-SA 4.0

In addition to the process organization the district authority commissioned the Research and Teaching Program Urban Design with the evaluation of the project. Hamburg Parliament issued the call for an evaluation through document 21/6472. UD's aim for this part of the commission was to operationalize the evaluation as a *research and design transfer*. UD argued to do so because of the project's model character, which, for UD, entailed the documentation and evaluation of the processes and procedures with the aim to share knowledge about pitfalls and potentials with future projects organized by other parties.

This technique is part of the UD curriculum at HCU between coursework and thesis. Students are asked to assemble a provisional summary of their entire body of work in order to enable

discussion with others regarding methods, tools, theories and motifs for their Urban Design Thesis Projects.

ABOUT COLUMN A

Focus-group-like discussions in planning processes are ubiquitous. Typical formats include inquiry colloquiums, public discussions, round tables, jury meetings, thematic workshops, markets of possibilities etc. All of these formats are planned discussions using a variety of modes of representation when talking about a project's status in order to review the processing of a particular topic or (set of) milestones so as to learn about assessments and their effects for future projections. Classic conceptualizations of the focus group address the individual in public discourse and/or the opinion of a group. "Compared to other survey types, the biggest advantage of the group discussions is that they can work out collective orientations, so to speak. Only in conversation one sees oneself compelled to call on one's own opinion and assert one's arguments, by which deeper attitudes and a wider range of reactions come to light. Participants' mutual influence and their relationship with the moderator, which is regarded as a disturbing variable in standardized procedures, are a constituent part of the procedure in group discussions" (Vogl 2014, 582, own translation).

Recently, study programs such as Social Design, Urban Design and Architecture with a focus on Live Projects have transposed concepts and formats of group discussions from social and cultural sciences. The Handbook for Live Projects by the Sheffield School of Architecture defines the reflective review as a detailed, round-table exploration of the project between the project management and (an)other reviewer(s) where the project management has time to focus on the project's processes as well as its outcomes.

The reflective review is assessed on the basis of

- The effectiveness of the project's organizational structure in relation to the project's motif and the quality of design work carried out
- The appropriateness and creativity of any format used during the process
- A reflection on oppositions, limitations and possibly better modes of realizing the project
- A reflection on wider implications of the lessons learned through this project and the potential scope for being applied to other projects.

Project management in Urban Design is a set of practices that unfold in a variety of settings. Delicate issues are often discussed in private, or among a limited set of actors in a back-room setting. Reflective reviews present a 'public' setting and thus are able to make the explication of knowledge production processes available for discussion beyond the project's internal organization. Throughout the reflective review, the project manager must be aware of different

roles enacted by its members. These could include: the moderator, the influencer, the opinion leader, the expert in a bubble, the generalist, the punk, the dummy, the reviewer, the projector, etc.

Conduct

Being open is not to be confused with arbitrariness. Just like in interview situations, people will appreciate a briefing about everyone and everything related to the reflective review and how it will be conducted, for instance by using a guide. Both formats (briefing and guide) function as a facilitator between all included actors and the research interest in a particular situation of a project. Reflective reviews with a group of people are no shortcut compared to interviews with individuals. The organization, transcription and analysis of a reflective review needs diligent researchers, assistants and production and post-production crew members.

Data privacy and protection

If research projects include the collection, processing or use of personal data, the rights of individuals and in particular their right to informational self-determination must also be taken into account. An insight into the data protection principles in Germany can be found in the privacy policy of the Council for Social and Economic Data (RatSWD).

REFERENCES

Vogl, Susanne. "Gruppendiskussionen." In *Handbuch Methoden der Empirischen Sozialforschung*, edited by Nina Baur and Jörg Blasius, 581–86. VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2014.
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