Chapter 9

Informal Networked Learning as Teamwork in Design Studio Cmyview: Using Mobile Digital Technologies to Connect with Student’s Everyday Experiences

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ABSTRACT

CmyView is a research project that investigates how mobile technologies have the potential to facilitate new ways to share, experience and understand the connections that people have with places. The aim of the project is to theorise and develop a tool and a methodology that addresses the reception of architecture and the built environment using mobile digital technologies that harness ubiquitous everyday practices, such as photography and walking. While CmyView is primarily focused on evidencing the reception of places, this chapter argues that these activities can also make a contribution to the core pedagogy of architectural education, the design studio. This chapter presents findings of an initial pilot study with four students at an Australian university that demonstrates how CmyView offers a valuable contribution to the educational experience in the design studio.

INTRODUCTION

The design studio is a particular pedagogical space that is central to the education of architects and designers. Within this mode of learning students undertake and practice solving design problems within the built environment, by drawing on, and synthesising knowledge from, other disciplinary areas. The studio reflects the architectural discipline’s primary concern with the production of buildings and is consequently an intellectual space where the educational tensions between the academy, the profession
Informal Networked Learning as Teamwork in Design Studio

and practice are often played out. The studio is often used as an exemplar of the value of problem-based learning, and in particular, Schön’s theories of professional knowledge and reflective practice. However it is not without critique: it is seen to dominate in the architectural curriculum; its open format presents complex social dynamics and inconsistencies within assessment; its insularity and sense of disconnection from society’s views of the built environment, as well as students own experiential knowledge about the world in which they live. The role of collaboration and teamwork as essential skills for professional practice are increasingly being recognised. This chapter describes the application of research focused on finding new and innovative ways to assess, experience and collaborate on the concept of social value of architecture and the built environment to the pedagogy of the design studio. Essentially, the chapter considers how the reception of architecture can contribute to the learning outcomes of students undertaking design studio, where the focus is on the production of architecture.

CmyView is a project that investigates how mobile technologies have the potential to facilitate new ways to share, experience and understand the connections that people have with places. This connection is described as social value in the field of heritage, sense of place in urban geography and place attachment in environmental psychology and is one part of the reception of architecture. The project is in the initial pilot phase and its central aim is to theorise and develop a tool and methodology that addresses social value. Strategically, CmyView aims to harness ubiquitous everyday practices, such as photography and walking that are commonly facilitated by mobile digital technologies. A prototype mobile application that is currently in development will be publicly launched in late 2016. For this chapter, a small study was carried out with architectural students at an Australian University, in order to investigate and focus upon the effects of sharing experiences of places, as a form of collaborative informal networked learning around social value. Students used the CmyView methodology to document their own walks, as well as to share in the experiences of other’s walks. They also completed two short surveys to discuss how these experiences could enhance their understanding and observations of the built environment.

The chapter positions the theoretical contribution that CmyView can make to architectural education by drawing upon the literature on the pedagogy of the design studio, teamwork in design, informal learning networks and visual culture, and then discusses these ideas in relation to the preliminary findings from the student study. In particular the chapter makes a contribution to the scholarship of teaching and learning by considering the crucial role of sharing in order to incorporate the reception of architecture and the built environment in the teaching of its production within the pedagogical framework of the design studio.

BACKGROUND

Architectural Education and the Profession of Architecture in Australia

To understand the centrality of the design studio, and its significance as space where educational and professional priorities play out, it is important to review its historical roots. The formalisation of architectural education in Australia is intimately linked to the rise of architecture as a profession and this connection is still evident in the regulation of the title Architect - in Australia, graduates who have been awarded a degree in architecture may not use the title ‘Architect’ until they are fully registered with the Board of Architects, as decreed in the Architects Act 2003. Notably, registration involves a period of professional practice undertaken after graduation from university, supervised by a senior registered