Participation:
Beneficial or Problematic?

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Contents

Abstract

Participation is a controversial topic, and although it may seem positive to begin with, for many people there are serious questions involved in the concept. When professionals intervene in informal settlements, the outcome can differ depending on the approach taken on the outset. To weigh up the arguments for and against participation, this dissertation will use the examples of Samuel Mockbee and Julia King in comparison with that of Ian Athfield. Additionally, the opinions of Daisy Froud, Markus Meissen and Jeremy Till, who each have strong views about the merits of participation, will be analysed. These opinions, together with a number of examples of participation in practice, will consider the role of the professional in intervention. The main question that this dissertation will address is; how can trained professionals use their skills and expertise to empower people in informal settlements so they can improve their own quality of life? One of the conclusions from this research, is that professionals must listen carefully, act when their expertise is required, and take responsibility for the choices made.

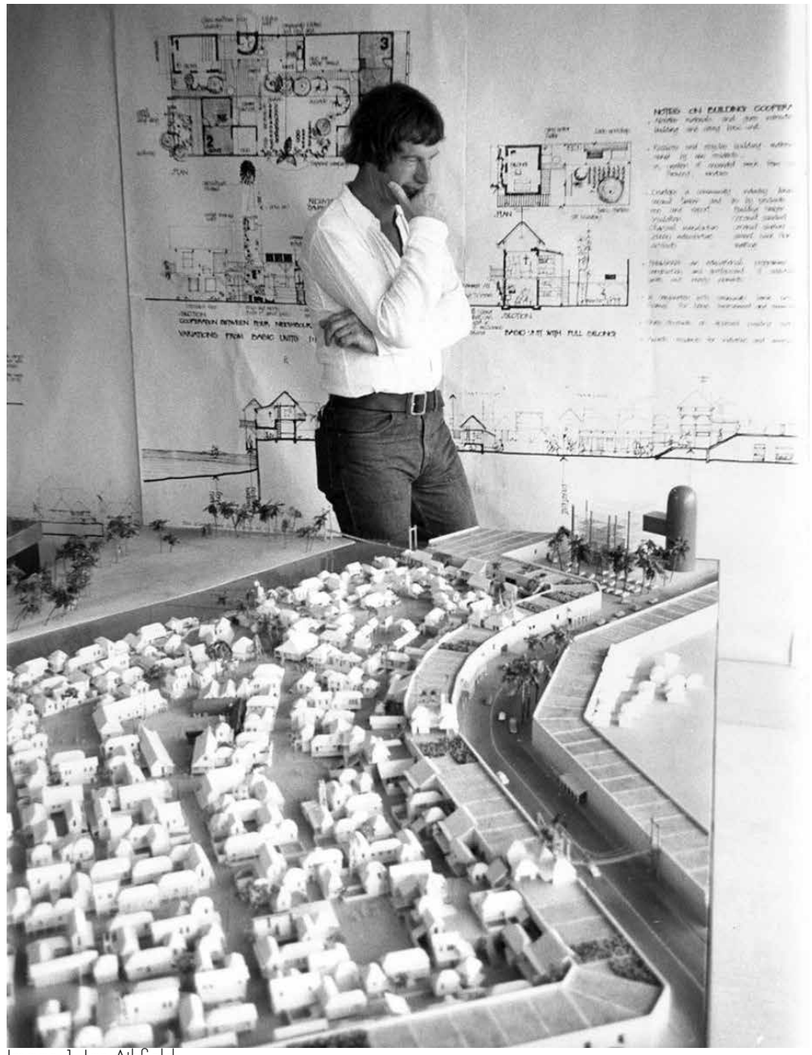
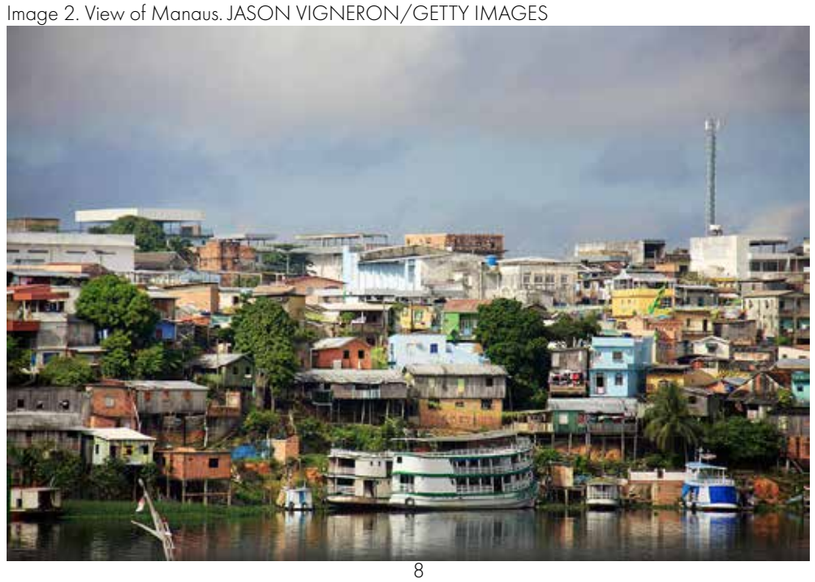


Image 1. Ian Athfield

Image 2. View of Manaus. JASON VIGNERON/GETTY IMAGES



Introduction to participation

Participation is built on the psychological theory known as the Ikea Effect. This is a cognitive bias, where people will value something more if they have helped to make it because they have invested their own time and effort into it. Participation programmes are targeted at people living in poor conditions who need help to improve their quality of life.

Professionals, designers and experts will intervene in these areas, designing and managing the projects, whilst the clients will give an insight into their needs and way of living, also often providing the labour, which reduces costs. The level of involvement and the dynamic between the professional and client varies a lot between projects, and many people have strong opinions about participation as a concept and how effective it really is. As I will soon be entering the professional world myself, I am interested in how professionals approach the problems of today, and how it may be possible to operate in areas that we do not know, as I am aware of the top-down approach (discussed below) where outsiders come into a community claiming to know what is right and wrong for the people of that community.
Participation is a controversial topic, and although it may seem positive to begin with, this is not entirely true and for many people, there are issues involved in the concept. Therefore I will examine some approaches that professionals take when intervening in situations, and discuss the arguments for and against participation, using informal settlements as a focus.[1]

There are a variety of programmes that operate in many different types of informal settlements as well as in communities with poor living conditions. Rural Studio, which was started by Samuel Mockbee in 1993, operates in communities in Alabama with people who lived in poor conditions and needed help to improve their homes and their quality of life[2]. Additionally, Julia King has done a lot of work in informal settlements in India, specifically dealing with the issues of toilets and sewer systems.[3] Alternatively, Marjetica Potrč and Sabine Bitter approach participation as artists rather than architects, resulting in different yet refreshing outcomes.

Markus Meisen and Jeremy Till have strong opinions against participation, and their reasoning will be used to weigh up the benefits with the disadvantages, and well as studying the project of Ian Athfield (Image 1), who made attempts to improve the living conditions of an informal settlement in Manila when he won a competition to design for 'squatter resettlement' in 1972, yet due to unplanned-for difficulties, the project did not take effect.[4]

There are many terms used in this area of discussion, for example the term 'public' refers to the government, and 'community' refers to the people who are living in these informal settlements. The 'non-professionals' are the clients and users whose homes and lives will be affected and these people will often form teams and committees to organise, design, and maintain the participation projects such as in India where Julia King worked. The 'professionals' are the trained experts such as architects, engineers and designers who have the knowledge and expertise to enable these participation projects to be successful and safe in the technical aspects.

Informal settlements

Informal settlements are classified as places where people, who often have no legal claim to the land, have settled and constructed housing with almost no regard for building regulations[5]. These settlements are usually located on the outskirts of a major city. Often they will not have access to basic services and infrastructure, as they are spontaneous and have not been controlled by the government[6]. Informal settlements can be slums or refugee camps, therefore a huge variety of people will live in these types of dwellings and for many different reasons. Refugee camps in particular will be formed in emergencies and in a rush with the intention of being temporary constructions. However, very often these will in fact become permanent settlements without the necessary infrastructure to support them[7].

There are many factors that can cause the formation of an informal settlement. Rapid population growth can be a cause, such as in Zanzibar, where informal settlements were not even considered to be illegal for a long time[8]. This also occurred in Manaus (Image 2), where between 1970 and 2003 the population became five times larger due to the establishment of the free trade zone and also because it was the only important city in the Amazonian region[9]. Additionally, rural- urban

1 Sanoff, '*Community participation methods in design and planning* ', 2000, pg 1.

2 Ezez. '*Our Story - Rural Studio*'
3 King, '*Poo, Power, and Participation*' (2019)
4 Schmertz, "The "Tondo" competition', (1976), pg 192.

5 OECD, '*Informal settlements*', 2001
6 Avis, '*Informal Settlements*', 2016
7 Meade, 2010.
8 Ali and Sulaiman, *'The Causes and Consequences of the Informal Settlements in Zanzibar'*, 2006, pg 2.
9 Fernanda and Rojas, '*Facing the Challenges of Informal Settlements in Urban*

Image 3. Samuel Mockbee

migration also occurred in Zanzibar and Manaus where people were travelling to the city in search of employment. Lack of affordable housing, poor planning policies and urban management, economic vulnerability and low-paid work, marginalisation, displacement caused by conflict, natural disasters and climate change are also reasons for these informal settlements to occur.[10]

Whilst they can be a hindrance to the city, the city also often relies on these settlements for employment as they provide labour, as well as consumers. The issues that occur as a result of informal settlements can be seen from the perspectives of the city or the residents of the informal settlement. For example these settlements can produce a lot of waste and odour which can be unpleasant for everyone. They can interfere with important systems, for example in Manaus where the informal settlements disrupt the drainage system, or they can form in the path of planned developments such as roads, which can lead to the settlements being destroyed and many people being displaced with nowhere else to go. Additionally, the large increase in population living near a city can put stress on existing services which can be very frustrating for the residents of the city.[11] Often these settlements will lack access to water and means for disposal of waste. This may cause illness and disease to spread in the informal settlements.[12] Another issue that occurred in Zanzibar is deforestation, as the informal settlements needed more space as they grew and this led to

Centers', pg3.

10 Avis, '*Informal Settlements'*, 2016.

11 Fernanda and Rojas, *'Facing the Challenges of Informal Settlements in Urban Centers'* pg4.

12 Ali and Sulaiman, *'The Causes and Consequences of the Informal Settlements in Zanzibar'*, 2006, pg 10.

environmental harm.[13]

Approaches and Attitudes

These settlements will inevitably increase in number and size, therefore it is vital that we, as professionals and designers, learn how best to deal and work with them, rather than against them. People are often prejudiced against informal settlements, however it is important that attitudes towards them change from seeing them as something that is a temporary inconvenience to a permanent and proliferating type of settlement. For many designers, it is a matter of sweeping away the unsafe, unsightly buildings, and building something innovative and beautiful; producing new housing which is usually far too expensive for the original inhabitants to live in and therefore these people are yet again pushed out of their homes. Although this can temporarily rectify disease, crime, and other social and environmental issues, it will also spread these to surrounding areas and consequently reinforce these issues. This attitude, which is too often imposed on informal settlements, destroys not only the buildings themselves, but also the established communities and their social connections.

Participation has been a prominent buzzword, which describes an approach used to try and resolve the problems attached to informal settlements. However this word has its own issues. Different methods of participation have been used in the past, for example, the bottom-up model, which demonstrates one way that participation programmes can be approached. Firstly, a location in desperate need of improvement is identified, and the community develops an action plan, receiving technical and financial help from public and private sectors. The community continues to receive financial support when the project has been completed (Bratt, 1987). The aim of this approach is to meet the goals of the community and start with their essential needs, rather than a top-down approach which starts with the government and can be a lot less socially and economically viable, even with the lowest-cost housing provided by government subsidy. Often the community will provide a fair amount of money to pay for a project and will provide their own labour which will reduce the costs a lot[14]. In theory, this approach allows the community to participate throughout the entirety of the project, and they are very much in charge of how it is carried out, with expertise provided for just the technical aspects. Therefore the community will feel very in control and less concerned about intrusion into their community from outsiders.

Mockbee (Image 3) believed that 'architects are given the gift of second sight',[15]and it is their duty to realise the impact they have on creating change, 'challenging the power of the status quo'[16] and 'breaking up social complacency[17], showing people, rather than simply talking about how life can look different. It is therefore an architect's responsibility to make decisions without waiting for politicians and multinational companies

13 Ali and Sulaiman, *'The Causes and Consequences of the Informal Settlements in Zanzibar'*, 2006, pg 10.

14 Sanoff, '*Community participation methods in design and planning* ', 2000, pg 6.

15 Mockbee, '*The Rural Studio in 'The Everyday and Architecture'* Architectural Design Magazine, 1998, Vol 68 7/8 Page 72.

16 Mockbee, '*The Rural Studio in 'The Everyday and Architecture'* Architectural Design Magazine, 1998, Vol 68 7/8 Page 72.

17 Mockbee, '*The Rural Studio in 'The Everyday and Architecture'* Architectural Design Magazine, 1998, Vol 68 7/8 Page 72.

Image 4. Billboard at the metro station Bellas Artes in Caracas

Image 5. Dry Toilet in Caracas, Venezuela

to make them first, always considering the widest context.[18] This involves 'education, healthcare, transportation, recreation, law enforcement, employment, the environment, the collective community that impacts on the lives of both the rich and the poor.'[19] Mockbee's strong opinion on the importance of architects offering their expertise to improve people's lives meets just as strong an argument for the opposite belief.

In his essay 'Architecture and Participation', Jeremy Till discusses the way in which participation became a necessary word to use in any meeting about a new development, but with very little meaning behind it. Often is it a box-ticking exercise, to approve plans with little or no communication between the professional and community. The designer will not bother to display the information in a comprehensive and accessible format for the unprofessional, and therefore it is impossible to make this into a real collaboration. 'Consultation fatigue'[20] can lead to the community agreeing to everything without understanding the consequences of what the designer is proposing, and is comparable to the idea of democracy, where the issues of 'power, manipulation and disenfranchisement'[21] disrupts the whole system. Of course is it a positive factor that participation allows everyone to be involved, but this engagement is not critically analysed, making it almost meaningless and simply an impediment. Therefore, the idea of participation was in dire need of reformulation.

With a similarly strong opposition to participation, Markus Meissen believes that use of the term 'participation' has been over saturated[22] due to the lack of projects in the 1990s which made it essential for architecture firms to use it in order to find any work. Any project without the mention of participation was simply lacking the modern approach to design. The term was only used as a step in the process to have a project approved, and would only be done to the minimal required level because otherwise it incurs cost and delay. Therefore participation became a 'veneer of worthiness'[23], and an 'expedient method of placation'[24], a convenient way to make people happy, rather than a method to make positive change in a community. Meissen compares participation to referendums[25], as a way of ducking the responsibility of decision making and placing it onto the community rather than the professional. He refers to the campaign to ban minarets in Switzerland by the right-winged Swiss People's Party who were 'using participatory democracy as a tool to foster xenophobia'[26]. Today, we can also look to the Brexit referendum, which Daisy Froud discussed at a lecture in 2016; 'The "Have Your Say" type of engagement is the most useless phrase... We all start behaving slightly idiotically'[27], however Froud does see the positives in participation which I will discuss later. Her point highlights the way that humans can behave when given power, creating a false sense of 'community' which leads to exclusion of those with even less power, and removes the potential for change.[28] Therefore Froud says that we must engage empathetically, but critically, as people's sense of place evolves completely illogically in a way that gives them comfort in familiarity, rather than the professional's logical way of thinking with functionality and efficiency at the top of the priority list.[29]

Meissen argues that the term participation is a 'shadow tactic'[30] used for economic development. He interviewed an artist who was involved in a participation project in Caracas, led by a Think Tank.[31] The artist, Sabine Bitter, had to challenge the process of the project to ensure it occurred in an authentic way and for the purpose of people changing their own fate. To do this, they placed images of a Barrio, 23 de Enero, in the metro station (Image 4) with the help of two women from the Barrio who were in charge of these billboards. Rather than contributing to the economy, this instead allowed reflection on the 'struggle for economic and spatial justice in Caracas'.

Similarly, Marjetica Potrč has also carried out participation projects with the approach of an artist. One example is a project in the barrios in Caracas, Venezuela(Image 5), addressing the need for toilets where there is a lack of water and 'the city infrastructure has

18 Mockbee, '*The Rural Studio in 'The Everyday and Architecture'* Architectural Design Magazine, 1998, Vol 68 7/8 Page 72.
19 Mockbee, '*The Rural Studio in 'The Everyday and Architecture'* Architectural Design Magazine, 1998, Vol 68 7/8 Page 72.
20 Till, '*Architecture and Participation*', 2005, chap 2 pg 1.
21 *Till, 'Architecture and Participation'*, chap 2 pg 3.
22 Miessen, '*The Nightmare of Participation*', 2010, pg.32.
23 Miessen, '*The Nightmare of Participation*', 2010, pg.33.
24 Miessen, '*The Nightmare of Participation*', 2010, pg.34.
25 Miessen, '*The Nightmare of Participation*', 2010, pg.42.
26 Miessen, '*The Nightmare of Participation*', 2010, pg.43.
27 Froud, '*Narrative Practice*', 2016.
28 Froud, '*Narrative Practice*', 2016.
29 Froud, '*Narrative Practice*', 2016.
30 Miessen, '*The Nightmare of Participation*', 2010, pg.38.
31 Miessen, '*The Nightmare of Participation*'. 2010, pg.34.

Image 6. Dry Toilet at Galerie Nordenhake, Berlin

Image 7. Savda Ghevra

failed barrios'[32]. Potrč already approached the project differently than an architect would have. Often architects can try to introduce structure into informal settlements, using the Western way of living as their precedent. She began by listening carefully to the residents of the barrio and learning about their way of living. Very importantly, she learnt that the people of the community were happy with their way of life, with one resident saying 'When you have money, you really must learn how to enjoy life. And when you have no money, you really must learn to enjoy life just the same.'[33] Potrč realised that 'you cannot give people something that he or she does not need or want'[34], and also recognised the pointlessness of planning ahead in Venezuela, as there is always a potential of a disaster. Reflecting on this information, and the way that barrios are built and developed with no plan or organisation, she decided to 'grow the project, not plan it',[35]allowing individuals from the community to build their own dry toilets when they wanted to. Materials were all sourced locally, and the toilets turn waste into fertiliser, with roofs that collect water for washing.[36] Marjetica Potrč's approach to participation in informal settlements is a very successful one; providing individuals with the expertise they need to help themselves improve their own quality of life. Not only does she operate in the informal settlements themselves, but she showcases the projects in museums to raise awareness and allow people to see the structures being built in the communities that would never otherwise be seen (Image 6). The exhibition was titled 'Urgent Architecture', and Potrč purposely used a contradictory name in order to highlight the difference between how many people perceive life in poverty, compared to how the people living in informal settlements really feel. Often we assume that informal settlements are built without thought and are chaotic and unsafe, yet Potrč found that the informal settlements were built by the very same people who had worked on the construction of the formal city[37], and are therefore extremely capable.

The approach of this artist can be compared to that of Sabine Bitter, mentioned earlier, who also worked in Caracas. The attitude and approach of an artist should therefore not be dismissed, as through patience and observation, substantial progress can be made.

Successful Participation

Someone else who has changed the structure of participation projects is Julia King, a professional who has been working in India to improve the conditions of slums. After living in Delhi as a teenager, studying architecture at the Architectural Association in London, and completing her Ph.D. entitled 'Incremental Cities: Discovering the Sweet Spot for making town-within-a-city examines resettlement colonies in Delhi, India' at the London Metropolitan University, King developed a passion for using her intelligence to help communities with what they could not do themselves, which is plumbing and sanitation systems, in order for them to do what they do well, which is building houses. She says that the site gives her the inspiration for the project and not the other way around. For example, when visiting Savda Ghevra, just outside Delhi she expected to build houses there, but immediately realised that what they really needed was sanitary toilets. This began her project working in this informal settlement.[38] Here, she made a very clear point that the people living here do not need outsiders coming to help with building houses, but that she is simply there to help the community help themselves, assisting with knowledge and funding to design affordable toilets and sewer systems.[39]

Her approach was to involve the people who are in the most need, which was mainly women who were in need of safe and hygienic toilets. The women in a slum in India formed an operations and maintenance committee to design and organise the building of toilets and sewage systems. Local labourers then built these toilets (Image 7). Once these were built, the women were in charge of running the sewage infrastructure.[40] This meant that the people in most need of the services took charge and arguably took more care of the facility as they had been so involved in constructing it. Julia King understands that the beneficiaries need to be willing to participate in these projects in order for them to be respected and to last. It is her attitude towards participation that makes her projects so successful.

Other successful participation schemes have involved the 'Rural Studio', a design-build architecture studio run by Auburn University which was established by Samuel Mockbee in 1993. Mockbee believed that 'everyone, rich or poor, deserves a shelter for the soul', and often used affordable

32 Potrč, '*Urgent Architecture*', 2004, pg.24.
33 Potrč, 'Urgent Architecture', 2004, pg.28.
34 Potrč, 'Urgent Architecture', 2004, pg.28.
35 Potrč, '*Urgent Architecture*', 2004, pg.28.
36 Potrč, Wall Street International, 2019.
37 Potrč, Artists at Work, 2012.
38 King, '*Pipe Dreams*', 2013
39 Quirk, '*Introducing "Potty-Girl," The Architect of the Future?*', 2014
40 King, '*Poo, Power, and Participation*' 2019


Image 8. Butterfly House. TIMOTHY HURSLEY


Image 9. Butterfly House. TIMOTHY HURSLEY


Image 10. Butterfly House. TIMOTHY HURSLEY 16

and salvaged materials whilst also designing innovatively and with a strong sense of place, spirit and social responsibility.[41] At Rural Studio, the students would work with underprivileged communities, asking their clients about what is most important to them in their homes, their needs and their ideal quality of life. Often the people that the students work with are living in very poor conditions with no help from the outside to improve this. Clients that received help from the Rural Studio include an elderly couple and their three grandchildren, and an elderly disabled woman and her husband.[42] Therefore, the variety of needs and lifestyles will vary dramatically between each client. The students would draw up an initial design which would be further discussed with the client and would be continued to be developed by a new group of students. After a year the house would be completed.[43] This approach involves the client right at the beginning stages of design, but not so much throughout the rest of the project. This means that the clients have a say in the way that they want the design to allow them to live and the students take over when it comes to developing these ideas and the technical aspects of the building. This can avoid long delays which can often occur when the client is involved all the way throughout the project. A successful example of one of the Rural Studio projects was the 'Butterfly House', (Images 8, 9, 10) built for an elderly couple, where the wife used a wheelchair. The students met the needs of the clients by building a porch roof out of tin and the house out of recycled wood from a church.

41 SFMOMA '*Mockbee, Samuel*', 2020
42 Manufacturing Intellect '*Samuel Mockbee Interview On Rural Studio (2000)*', 2016
43 Dean, '*Rural Studio*', 2002

By involving the client at the design stages, it can improve their social well-being in the long run. Everyone will have different sociocultural needs and they will therefore not be catered to if standardised housing is built. Habraken (1986) said that the act of the user living is the important process which results in the house, rather than designing the house first and then living in it. Additionally, Hardie (1988) stated that people will always accept something more if they have designed it themselves. Sanoff (1988) argued that culture is vital in developing architecture, and by involving the community, the developments will remain in harmony with the culture and traditions of that community, rather than westernised industrial designs.[44]

Challenges of Participation

Often architects are very focused on designing buildings with beautiful forms, yet this creates unknown outcomes and impacts on the users' lives, rather than acting as a citizen and intervening in informal settlements to create certain outcomes with unpredictable forms.

Engaging the clients in the design process means that sometimes there are complications and the project can be slower than usual. Julia King found that when working in an unserviced slum in central Delhi, a large proportion of the residents were men, who did not feel the need for a toilet as men are not as affected as women by poor water sanitation and issues of safety with toilets. This is because women are very vulnerable to contracting urinary tract infections from not being able to use the toilets whenever they need of fear of being sexually assaulted, as well as other reasons such as menstruation and taking care of young children. They were also worried that this project would be similar to a nearby regeneration project which led to demolition of properties, so felt very protective over their homes. This means that patience is very important in such participation projects and it can be a slow process. Willingness plays such a vital role in the process of participation as it gives people ownership and therefore patience for the duration of the work. To be 'willing' will always be a part of this. However, this does conflict with the rapid rate of urbanisation. With more and more people living in poor conditions and requiring urgent sanitation services, it is difficult to be patient and still see the project through thoroughly and as intended.[45]

44 Sanoff, '*Community participation methods in design and planning* ', 2000

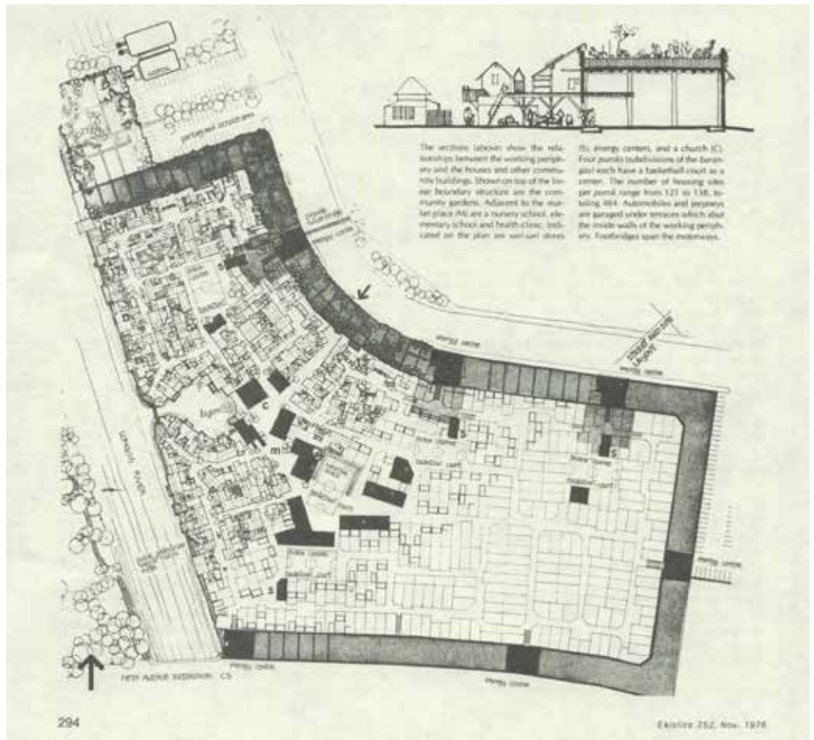
King also found that finding the funding for these sanitation systems was a huge challenge, as often people are not keen on giving money for sewers as much as they are for schools. King did work with an NGO called CURE, and often this is how projects like this one are funded, as the government and larger investors are not interested because of the costliness with little to no reward for them. Permission links into this, as the state can make it very difficult to allow projects to move forward. King claims that India is well known for having many barriers that are difficult to cross for projects such as this one.[46] This experience is comparable to that of Ian Athfield's when designing for squatter settlements in the Philippines.

Ian Athfield was an architect from New Zealand, who unlike other architects, accepted the idea that buildings shape our lifestyles and knew that as an architect it was his responsibility to acknowledge,

45 Dean, '*Rural Studio*', 2002
46 Quirk, '*Introducing "Potty-Girl," The Architect of the Future?*', 2014

Image 11. Ian Athfield's models for his design

Image 12. Ian Athfield's drawing of his design



and work with this.[47] He won 'The International Architectural Foundation's (IAF) competition for the design of new human settlements' in Manila.[48] The government in the Philippines had previously tried to evict squatters and force them to relocate, but many, especially men, ended up returning to Manila as there were no jobs where they had been relocated to, and often the women and children were left in these relocation settlements.[49] This competition was created by the government to solve the 'problem' of the informal settlements in Manila, and the plan was to move the 169,710 squatters from the tiny 455 acres that they had settled on to a nearby landfill site which was 1,272 acres. The aim was to improve the services, transport systems and living conditions of the community, but the main concern of the government was in fact to remove this settlement from the fringes of the city where they felt they were an annoyance.[50] Many people had moved to Manila from rural areas as the city could provide them with jobs and services. Without having ever visited the country, and through understanding the culture and way of living simply through research, Athfield designed a resettlement site for the people who had settled on the outskirts of the city (images 11 and 12). His design was mainly about 'helping people to help themselves'.[51] Energy centres would be provided as five by three metre units which people could add onto with their own materials, solving the combined problems of the energy and waste from the community and industry. He designed industry workplaces around the edges of the site, and planned to build houses from the prolific supply of coconut timber, recycled corrugated iron roofs, and sanded cement plaster over the walls which the people could do themselves. Experts would come in from the outside to educate the people about skilled areas of expertise such as insulation and party walls. He imagined that the communities and connections that had been formed in the existing informal settlement would reform and people would easily make new ones. Yet this is often an issue with resettlement sites, as the connection were formed over long periods of time and vital in any settlement to make it work.

Immediately, challenges were faced as the people living here did not want to be relocated, and felt that this move could result in many people losing their jobs as they did not have the skills for the new industries that were planned to be built here which were intended to decrease unemployment. Additionally, people felt that Athfield had presented a polished design which was very rigid and would be built with no modification or consideration of the squatters and what they felt was most important to them. However, Athfield found out through a woman who was meant to be representing the people of the community when judging the competition that they were in fact very unfamiliar with his design and had been minimally informed about the actual competition.
The Head of the Human Settlements Commission who was the coordinator of the competition talked about how they have learnt in the past that a settlement cannot be built on a new site and have a community formed overnight. This is something that Athfield realised when finally visiting the informal settlement. When going to see the housing that the World Bank had been building nearby, he said that 'the physical relationships were all predetermined before you get the people in' and that what was being built was 'middle class housing done cheaply',[52] with people being forced into a physical arrangement that did not exist in the existing settlement. He felt that the houses were already beautifully built and that he had misjudged how much the people can do for themselves. Athfield said that the people were already happy, had purpose and pride, and their homes were kept immaculate. A better solution would be to work within the existing area and all that was needed was simply some 'conservative pruning'.

When talking to the ambassador of the Philippines, she explained that there were many steps that the government would have to go through before anything could have gone ahead. The land itself needed to be cleared, a lot of new infrastructure would have had to be built, and the government was relying on the fact that World Bank had already invested in the area meaning that infrastructure was naturally flowing into the area anyway. A number of legal steps would need to be taken to resolve the position of the land and the boundary lines, as well as many others issues that would have had to be dealt with.

This is an example of the many difficulties faced when attempting to carry out participation programmes such as the complications with the government and laws, information being passed onto the people of the community and their willingness to trust an expert and contribute to making a change to their way

47 The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology, 'Reply To 'Professional Elitism Or Community Control? The Manila Housing Competition', 1977, pg 82.

48 Schmertz, *'The "Tondo" competition'*, 1976, pg 292-295.

49 Niell, '*Architect Athfield*', 1977

50 Niell, '*Architect Athfield*', 1977

51 Niell, '*Architect Athfield*', 1977

52 Niell, 'Architect Athfield', 1977

of living. This was combined with the difficulty of an expert outsider truly understanding the needs and aspirations of the community. However, the positive outcome of this was that Athfield did learn from this experience after talking to people of the community, and that he had come into the settlement from the outside with this expertise and an attitude of how the project should be done. This is in contrast to Julia King, who was working on the ground with the community, realising that they were experts in their own right, knowing how the informal settlement runs, and being highly skilled in building.

How to do participation right

It can be difficult when first meeting the user, as often they can be very sceptical about an outsider coming in to help. This is why it is vital that it is made clear to the client that the professionals are there to inject their expert knowledge, rather than destroy and replace, which is what happens far too often with regeneration projects.

In the case of Samuel Mockbee's Rural Studio programme, students in second year would choose their client from a list which would be provided by the Hale County Department of Human Resources, and sometimes the clients would be chosen for the students by the professors. The students would then meet the clients and ask them about what is most important to them in terms of functionality within their homes.[53] By asking these questions, the designer will gain the trust of the client.

An architect must gain the trust of their clients to begin any project. People living in informal settlements might not be used to benefiting from professionals in a largely unregulated environment. Julia King experienced this in a slum in central Delhi where the community was fearful of regeneration after seeing the impact that it had on a nearby slum which was destroyed and replaced. Therefore, it was her duty to ensure that the community stayed intact and was not destroyed or compromised when building the sewage systems and toilets, and that the only impacts were improvements to the community's living conditions.

Botz-Bornstein stated that 'There is nothing new in reducing rich people's lives to functionalism, but the ambition to enhance poor people's lives through art can still be considered as rather eccentric.'[54] People will always be sceptical of those who are not from the community coming in and imposing their ideas, especially architects and designers who can be very controlling over their designs. However, by completely involving the community from the design stage onwards, as Julia King did in India, people will see that their needs are being put first and will feel more in control of the project.

Any design or intervention must be adaptive to fulfil the needs of the user, and designers must take a holistic approach to improving the informal settlements. Rural Studio claim that the students are trained to be 'citizen architects', which represents a different mindset that these students will have learned when working with communities that they might not be familiar with. In other words, looking at the project from the point of view of a citizen, who is concerned with creating a shelter, as well as an architect, who is concerned with the aesthetics and creating something beautiful. Rural Studio 'continually questions what should be built, rather than what can be built.'[55] They ensure that any house they build is successful in four ways; it must be durable, efficient, enhance health, and help to increase wealth. By beginning with these goals, it ensures the client that they can trust the professionals in putting their needs first before any spectacular design ideas. Samuel Mockbee believed that the role of the architect is to design homes that are 'dignified, even for modest spaces with everyday uses' and that these spaces can exceed the expectations of the client despite sticking to a low budget.[56] This means that the designer has a duty to think beyond what the client feels they need, and create a home that through aesthetics and innovative design, can dramatically improve the quality of peoples' lives.

Daisy Froud claims that this way of thinking must be taught at university, and that 'education is out of touch' with the 'messy universe where "communities", planners and other constraints ambush young creators as they emerge from academia's protective bubble'[57], reinforced by the 2015 RIBA poll. When she asked the founding director of The SENSEable City Lab at MIT, Carlo Ratti, he said 'I prefer not to focus on the 'real world. Do not think about how the world is, but how it could be." This seemingly innovative way of thinking can in fact hinder graduating architects, as they have not been faced with the real restrictions of laws, money and opinions. Froud concluded with Ratti and Alan Penn, Dean of The Bartlett, that the purpose of an architectural education is to allow students to 'determine the role that they wish to play in the world'[58] through experimentation and the development of 'problem-finding', as well as focusing on 'enabling rather than defining' by collaborating with other disciplines and citizens. Froud currently works with community redevelopments to gather stories that people spiral off into telling, and presents this in front of them in order to make a critical decision about the changes together. She believes that it is the architect's job to put in place the critical framework in which together with a community they evaluate that community's desires.[59] Ensuring that she does not make the mistake of causing Jeremy Till's symptom of participation, 'consultation fatigue', Daisy Froud makes a point about how she ensures that the ideas and designs presented to the unprofessional are actually interesting and make people want to look and them. After giving the citizens 'authorship' in deciding the stories that they want to be told, the power then goes onto the architect, giving them the responsibility of using their skills to tell these stories. This highlights Till's use of the terms 'citizen-expert' where the people of the community know the community and how it is run and should continue to be, compared to the 'expert-citizen'[60]; the architect, engineer designer, who has those skills and expertise and should remain in the position of responsibility to create an outcome that the citizens want and need.[61]

Conclusion

Although on one hand participation can be a successful way to improve the living conditions in informal settlements, on the other hand it has previously been carried out unsuccessfully, reinforcing major issues. Professionals often bring power relationships and attitudes into their work which can distract from the real needs of the people that they are building for in the first place, resulting in designs that can completely miss the point of the project involving the community. However, Julia King, Marjetica Potrč and Samuel Mockbee have shown that when operating in areas that they do not know, professionals must listen carefully, act when their expertise is required, and take responsibility for the choices made. Daisy Froud believes that 'critical analysis of existing stories and critical construction of new ones lies at the heart of good participation.'[62] She referred to the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre, who pointed out in '*Right to the City*'[63] that as part of the industrial revolution, workers were brought to the city and built it, and then were shoved back out to the edges in the post-industrialising world, yet they should have the right to continue to produce the city as it grows. This makes it clear that as professionals, our duty is to use our skills and expertise to empower people in informal settlements to improve their quality of life.

53 Dean, 'Rural Studio', 2002

54 BOTZ-BORNSTEIN, '*Cardboard Houses with Wings*', (2010)

55 Ezez '*About - Rural Studio*'

56 Ezez. "*Learning Culture - Rural Studio*"

57 Froud, '*How should architecture be taught in the 21st century?*', 2015.

58 Froud, '*How should architecture be taught in the 21st century?*', 2015.

59 Froud, 2016

60 Till, '*Architecture and Participation*', 2005, chap 2 pg 12.

61 Froud, 2016

62 Froud, 2016

63 Lefebvre, '*Le droit à la ville*', 1973.

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