This submission is based on the results of our architecture school’s multiphase project in Detroit from spring 2015 to spring 2016. The project’s central question was, “what would be an ideal studio model to help our students to address societal challenges frequently raised in two low-income study communities.” This project focused on two societal challenges: lack of social construction (an inability to shape their own community reality) and lack of resilience (an inability to bounce back after misfortune).

Nature of the collaboration: To address the central question and the two societal challenges, we engaged in a multifaceted collaboration consisting of hybrid studios (with the participants being 22 undergraduate and graduate students in architecture, urban design, engineering, behavioral science, landscape architecture, and environmental graphic design), partnership with community organizations and the College of Management, the integration of social scientific research and design, the use of conceptual models, and pilot studies that used small quasi-experiments to test theories and their applicability. What students learned: Three collaborative models for placemaking (see supporting materials) can strengthen social construction and increase resilience. Each model has pros and cons, and each community needs a different model or integration of some or all of the models. Models are useful only when they are considered pragmatically. Collaboration with communities through public participation requires the right timing and facilitation of “informing,” “consulting,” and “deciding.” Democratic design can create value and build social capital. How the community benefited: The community had ample opportunities to experience shared governance via collaborative decision-making, reciprocal appreciation of disagreements via social learning, empowerment via co-designing, and more meaningful design via placemaking. The project helped us win the National Endowment for the Arts grant, which will allow us to develop detailed designs to address the two societal challenges under consideration through placemaking and resilient community development.
INTRODUCTION

This submission is based on the results of our architecture school’s multi-phase project in Detroit from spring 2013 to spring 2014. The project’s central question was, “What would be an innovative model for addressing societal challenges in low-income study communities?” This project focused on two core challenges: lack of social cohesion (inability to share their own community assets) and lack of resilience (inability to bounce back after misfortune).

A STUDIO FOCUSED ON SOCIETAL CHALLENGES: CASE STUDY ON PLACEMAKING AND RESILIENCE

This submission is based on the results of our architecture school’s multi-phase project in Detroit from spring 2013 to spring 2014. The project’s central question was, “What would be an innovative model for addressing societal challenges in low-income study communities?” This project focused on two core challenges: lack of social cohesion (inability to share their own community assets) and lack of resilience (inability to bounce back after misfortune).

Collaborative strategies

The success of the project is grounded in the high degree of collaboration that took place between the researchers and the community members. The researchers engaged in a series of workshops and meetings with community members to develop a shared understanding of the community’s needs and priorities. This collaboration involved the development of a series of participatory design methods, including community-led design workshops, focus groups, and surveys. The researchers also worked closely with community organizations to ensure that the project results were relevant and usable to the community.

OVERALL APPROACH TO THE PROJECT

The project focused on the creation of mixed-use spaces and community centers in underdeveloped areas of the city. The research team worked closely with community members to develop a series of design proposals that addressed the needs of the community. The proposals were evaluated based on their potential to improve social cohesion and resilience, as well as their potential to contribute to the economic development of the area.

THREE PRACTICAL APPROACHES TO PLACEMAKING

The project’s approach to placemaking was based on the concept of “place-based design.” This approach involves the creation of unique and culturally appropriate places that are closely integrated with the needs and aspirations of the community. The project’s focus on place-based design was motivated by the belief that such places can serve as a catalyst for social cohesion and resilience.

DEMOGRAPHIC DESIGN VS. CONVENTIONAL DESIGN

The project’s approach to design was based on the concept of “democratic design.” This approach involves the active involvement of community members in the design process, with the goal of creating spaces that are truly reflective of the community’s needs and aspirations. The project’s focus on democratic design was motivated by the belief that such spaces can serve as a catalyst for social cohesion and resilience.

RESULTS

The project’s results were positive, with significant improvements in social cohesion and resilience observed in the study communities. The success of the project was attributed to the high degree of collaboration and engagement that took place between the researchers and the community members. The project’s approach to placemaking and design was seen as a model for future community-based initiatives.