

The Role of Client Engagement in Public Space Making in Korea

In March 2014, Zaha Hadid's Dongdaemun Design Plaza (DDP) opened its doors to the public after five years and about KRW 1 trillion (approx. USD 1 bil.) in construction and land purchase (Kim, 2014). Since its opening, DDP has been often referred to as "UFO Landing Site" by the public. Considering Seoul is a city overcrowded with uninspiring utilitarian concrete buildings, one might interpret this alias as a compliment. However, when it comes to DDP's role and justification for spending millions of tax-payers' money, most residents of Seoul are not as forgiving.

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Figure 1: Dongdaemun Design Plaza, recently opened mega public project in Seoul, Korea.

INTRODUCTION

Without a doubt, most mega public projects around world will undergo a series of scrutiny over their effectiveness in reinforcing and defining public good and social benefit. However, many contemporary architects, either intentionally or unintentionally, dissociate themselves from politics and social discussions to defend and validate the value of public investments in built environments.

By disengaging themselves from such debates, architecture further intensifies skepticism of the public's view on any public projects, especially mega projects



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such as DDP. There have been some attempts to incorporate the public in the architectural design process like design charrette and town hall meetings; however, client and user engagement has been largely abandoned and still remains primitive compare to other stages of architectural design process.

This paper aims to address the systematic weakness in the design process of public built projects. With rising public awareness and voices over public sector projects in Korea, failure to address the public's need to have more direct and effective public engagement has brought distrust and negative sentiment on all public sector built projects in Korea. Certainly, this phenomenon cannot be blamed solely on the insufficient public engagement; however, this paper aims to emphasize the need for development of more effective public engagement process through interpreting the recent trend in application of service design in public sector projects. Based on two recent public projects in Korea, this paper demonstrates how Service Design has supplemented the overlooked scope of architecture in changing role of public engagement in Korea.

A POLITICAL SHIFT: FROM GOVERNMENT-LED MODEL TO USER-CENTRIC MODEL

Over the last decade, DDP and a few other mega public projects, remnants from the era of real estate and construction boom in Seoul, have failed to capture public support. And this failure drove the ruling conservative government out of the central and local governments. And the public chose left-wing government promising investments in public services and welfare instead of construction-oriented public projects. This drastic reversal in politics meant radical changes were in store. The current mayor, Wonsoon Park, placed moratorium on all major public projects and to go through zero-base evaluation to validate their rationalization. As a result, most large public projects were cancelled or minimized.

However, Mayor Park's most important vision for his office was not about cancelling the mega public projects from the previous pro-development government; he strongly advocated for creating a government that has "transparent communication" with the public. This implied a fundamentally shift in how public projects are initiated and conducted in Seoul Metropolitan Government: from a government-driven model to a citizen-centric or user-centric model.

In order to support this major shift in governance, the new government searched for a different and more efficient way of communicating with the public from the inception to the delivery of public projects. One of the obvious choices made by the new government is to turn to Service Design. Because, prior to Mayor Park took office, the public engagement was limited to public hearings and a few design charrettes in small neighborhood redevelopment projects. Needless to say, the public engagement satisfied legal protocols but lacked substance. Thus, the new government thought it was necessary to overhaul the public engagement process in order to reinforce transparency and communication with the public. And if architects have demonstrated their proficiency in dealing with the public, Seoul Metropolitan Government would still be solely relying on architects.

Once Mayor Park decided to open up the government, criticisms from the public became harder to dismiss in public projects where numerous client groups with complex web of social and political agendas, not to mention the public equipped with social media platforms, express their views and opinions. Another words, he needed a methodology that can manage and steer public consensus rather than trying to defend public investment in built projects. Inability to cope with this

sudden change in public engagement, many architects were not trained to accept this challenge and many refused to acknowledge that this was a part of their scope of work. Thus, Service Design makes its first debut in public projects in Seoul.

WHAT IS SERVICE DESIGN?

Service Design is a discipline that is broad and still malleable. However, this presentation will settle with general description of Service Design enough to illustrate its relevance to architecture. Service Design is thought to be originated in the 80's from marketing and management disciplines to create strategies that were user-specific and user-centric. (Shostack, 1982) Over time, the discipline of service design developed analytical tools adopted from anthropology, sociology, ethnography and others. In "This is Service Design Thinking," Marc Stickdorn's 5 Principles of Service Design Thinking efficiently summarizes Service Design (Stickdorn, 2013):

1. User-centers: Services should be experienced through the customer's eyes
2. Co-creative: All stakeholders should be included in the service design process.
3. Sequencing: The service should be visualized as a sequence of interrelated actions
4. Evidencing: Intangible services should be visualized in terms of physical artefacts
5. Holistic: The entire environment of a service should be considered

There is no single definition of Service Design; however, the principles listed above clearly identify characteristics that are missing in architecture related to public engagement in public projects and public space making.

Service Design promises confrontation-free, users' needs-based and Interactive public engagements unlike the current public engagement projects. And a lot of local governments are racing to issue consultancy projects to Service Design due to its ability to create bonding between users and various stakeholders.

SOGEUMGIL: A DIFFERENT STRATEGY IN PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

In 2008, Yeomli-dong was designated by the government for residential neighborhood redevelopment program, aka "New Town Project," which meant Yeomli-dong was slated to be demolished and rebuilt with high-rise apartments. However, in

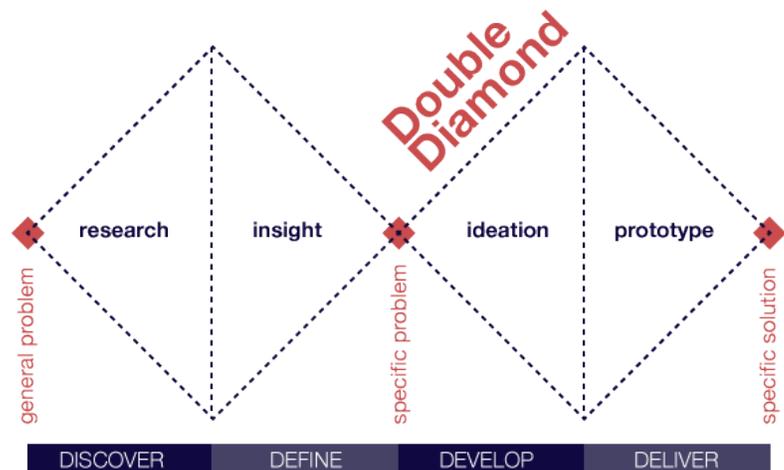


Figure 2: "Double Diamond": Service Design Methodology and Design Process. Source: UK Design Council.



▲ Yeomli-dong ISSUE CLOUD

염리동의 이슈와 다양한 이해관계자의 니즈를 수렴하여
핵심 문제점을 도출

리서치에서 도출한 주민들의 니즈와 문제점, 경험지도, 범죄환경분석 자료를 바탕으로 다양한 분야전문가와 함께 분석하고 문제의 핵심구조를 파악했다.



▲ 다양한 분야전문가들과의 Co-creation Workshop

소금길 운동 콘텐츠

소금길 운동코스는 전문 트레이너가 지역의 특성에 맞게 설계했다. 염리동 지역의 높낮이와 경사를 이용한 유산소 운동과 소금길 시작점의 스트레칭, 자투리 공간의 구조물을 이용해 근력운동이 가능하도록 설계하였다.



▲ 소금길 운동 코스 설계

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2011, this was one of the first communities to benefit from Mayor Park's promise to revitalize dilapidated residential neighborhood through any other means other than redevelopment program. (Won, 2012) And he chose CPTED and Service Design to provide an alternative to the real estate-led development models which proven to be socially and economically unsustainable according to numerous researches. However, narrow alleys and steep slopes in parts of the neighborhood left vulnerable to crime and burglary. These existing conditions were some of the biggest

Figure 3: Service Design Workshops to Identify Clients' needs. (left) Co-creation at Work: A Fitness Trainer to Help to Make Yeomli-dong Crime-free. Source: SDA (right).

concerns with the neighborhood that had to be resolved. Seoul Metropolitan Government together with CPTED and Service Design consultants, undertook a project to engage and mobilize the residents over 8 months period in 2012.

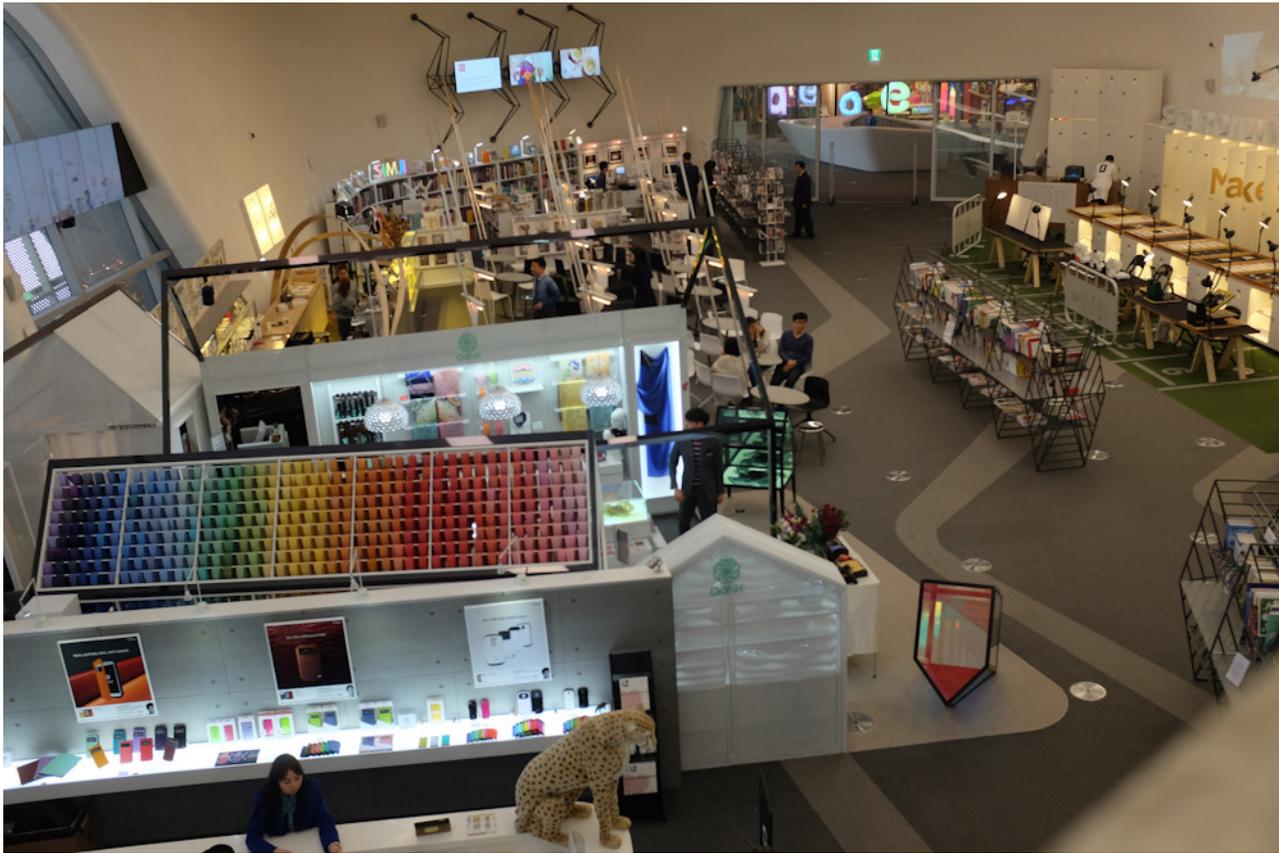
As a pilot project, the brief asked for community engagement from its conception in order to ensure every participant were fully informed and aware of the problems and issues in their own neighborhood. It was very clear from the beginning that consultants only provided recommendations to the community, and that the outcome was not preconceived by the consultants.

As a specialized field of architecture, CPTED's involvement seemed somewhat expected considering the neighborhood needed to fight crime and provide sense of security for the local residents. However, Service Design's involvement in built environment surprised many architects. Provided that most local governments in Korea are reluctant to try anything new, this move by Seoul Metropolitan Government can be explained as a giant leap out of desperation to supplement architecture's incompetency to deliver meaningful public engagement.

Service Design's role in Sogeumgil project can be summarized as engaging the residents in the design process. Most of the design process was similar to design charrettes in the US; however, Service Design had to overcome a few social and cultural differences shared in Korea and many East Asian countries. First, Korea has a very strong Confucianism social background that emphasizes hierarchy by age, sex, occupation, and social status. This meant round table discussions and debates are not efficient form of public engagement. Second, most of the public projects dealt with lower income neighborhoods where residents do not have high-level public awareness resulting in strong NIMBY reactions. And third, voicing their ideas and opinions in public was not culturally practiced. Many residents came to public hearings to raise their criticisms, not to listen to other residents.

Rather than focusing its efforts in public debates and discussions, extensive data was collected through interviews and surveys by researchers individually and in groups. Based on this data, Service Design conducted workshops very much like design charrettes, but the residents were asked to identify the needs rather than the wants. By focusing on the needs, the researchers were able to focus their attention to understanding about themselves, not on the outcomes or products. Needless to say, the atmosphere of the workshops produced rather pleasant environment without the tension that exists in public hearings. After identifying and organizing the needs of the residents, through "co-creation," various innovative services were proposed. "Co-creation" is one of the critical components of Service Design that allows experts from various disciplines to come together and deliver innovative solutions based on clearly identified needs of the users. In Sogeumgil project, CPTED expert, graphic illustrator, a trainer, play expert, and service designer participated to propose a set of services for the residents. And these innovative ways to make difference in the user experience is called, "touch-point." This is typically a way or method how the intended user's needs are met with an innovative service.

a complete ecology of services was evaluated, in order to engage the public, Service Design employed a methodology called, "Persona." This is a communication strategy to reach out to the residents by characterizing the users into certain personality whom the residents can relate to. The needs of specific persona resulted in a set of detailed deliverables. Then a hypothetical "Journey Map" is presented to let the residents imagine how they will be using the proposed services. At



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at this point, the residents were clearly communicated the source of each service and how the services were relevant to their everyday life. Upon completion, Sogeumgil project won numerous awards and is visited by hundreds of local governments around the country. Following the success of the project, Seoul Metropolitan Government has identified three more neighborhoods to apply the same formula.

DONGDAEMUN DESIGN PLAZA: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH COMMUNICATION

Following the success of Sogeumgil project, Seoul Metropolitan Government decided to apply Service Design to DDP. According to experts, it is expected to cost around KRW 3 bil. (Approx. USD 3 mil.) per year just to maintain the building. (Kim, 2014) Like many culture-led and politically charged massive public projects, the economic viability of the DDP was questionable from the start. The brief for the design competition was based on a loosely defined space program related to design. Without a substantial revision of its operation, it was obvious that DDP will be a white elephant for the new government. Mayor Park put Seoul Design Foundation's Department of Service Design in charge of define and develop unique user experience for DDP with a viable business plan.

For the service design team, it seemed apparent that the operation of the surreal interior spaces inside the unworldly "urban object" would require a user-centric service and unique user experience design. It is not uncommon for large public projects including outdoor public spaces to be oversized and devoid of user experience. Service designers worked hard to completely reprogram the entire complex including the exhibition area and facilities to deliver a menu of user-centric services and unique user experiences for DDP.

Figure 4: Service Design to Fill up the Empty Space Addressing the Users' Needs and Attracting Potential Users.

One of many strengths of Service Design is its ability to communicate clearly through graphics. Process diagrams and workshop results are always carefully devised to communicate the needs and provide evidence for each service to the general audience. The final product of Service Design was presented using journey mapping technique to improve wayfinding and circulation; helping average citizens to orient themselves and find restrooms inside the building. Through clear visual communications, service design provided a sense of connection between the user and service provider; this is another way of engaging the public to initiate a continued dialogue with the public project.

Most mega public projects, despite their scale and usage, are designed independent of its services and operation: these are defined by the client on a separate contract. Although sustainability of public projects depend on a realistic yet flexible business plan, architectural services tend to be based on static space requirements described by bureaucrats. However, developing services is undoubtedly outside the architect's scope of services; however, architects should understand that without a viable and innovative service, it's just another eye-catching "shell". In this regard, architects must encourage local governments to engage architects early on in the process. And this communication between service design and architectural design ensures sustainability and innovation in public projects.

ASIAN CULTURE COMPLEX: SERVICE DESIGN TO DEFINE IDENTIFY, CONTENTS AND FUTURE USERS

In 2002, President Roh Moo-hyun won his presidency promising the people of Gwangju that he will transform their city into a hub-city of cultural venues. Three years after his took office, a proposal for Asian Culture Complex (ACC) was chosen from a range of international competition entries. The brief for the competition prescribed how much space and types of venues to be included for the competition, but like many other mega public built projects in Korea, these shared a similar attitude, "build it, and they will come," placing emphasis on the built form rather than planning of organization and structure to manage the buildings. Another words, most of the mega public projects in Korea lacked "software" to the newly built "hardware." This applies to DDP discussed earlier in this paper.

Numerous factors can be accountable for this approach to the built public projects in Korea: lack of professionals to organize and run these venues, administrative redundancy and compartmentalized services, accustomed to the top-down public service, piece-meal public projects linked to government office terms and other bureaucratic and administrative inefficiencies. Thus, many architects may dismiss all accusations that the current mega public projects are products of irresponsible architects. However, this paper argues through public participation process in the design of public built projects, architects can help the government to produce a more sustainable public venue; furthermore, architects will be able to produce better buildings.

In 2007, the Presidential Commission for ACC held two public hearings which satisfied the legal formalities required as a part of urban planning laws; however, these hearings were not intended to interact with the public about the identity and the contents for the project area of 128,621 m² which contained a series of large open public spaces and floor area of 173,539m².

Service Design professionals were invited to host interactive public engagement sessions called Design Dives. These public engagement sessions intended to



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understand the public's opinions on the identity and contents for ACC. Through a series of interactive workshops and team projects, the public participated in describing their needs in public cultural venues. Also, the selected teams helped to identify descriptive service map to various potential users such as foreigners visiting ACC from abroad which proved to be very difficult. Using Service Design Tools, Journey Map and Town Watching, the researchers along with the public participants were able to identify hardships and difficulties for foreigners to visit Gwangju and ACC from abroad. It is worth pointing out that these efforts were done in parallel to the design and construction of the venue for ACC. It's astounding that these contents and programs will have to be reformulated once the complex is finished. This built-in inefficiency of delivering mega built public project must be reconsidered for the sustainability of these projects.

CONCLUSION

The nature of public engagement in public projects is rapidly changing in Korea. And once the government is committed to expanding the scope of public engagement, architecture must embrace this change swiftly to overcome public's negative predisposition and distrust in built public projects. Architecture must find a way to communicate with the public of the benefits and qualities that a well-designed environment can bring.

As demonstrated with the two cases, Service Design presents a practical set of principles and methodologies that can be benchmarked. However, further investigation is required to decipher whether architecture should respect Service Design as a professional discipline and collaborate to expand the public engagement process or reconfigure public engagement process to fit into the existing design process.

Figure 5: Design Dive: Public Engagement by Service Design Council for Defining Asian Culture Complex (ACC)'s Identity and Contents.

ENDNOTES

1. Kim, K. (2014) <http://www.pressian.com/news/article.html?no=115625>, Pressian.com.
2. Shostack, GL (1982) How to Design a Service, Emerald Insight.
3. Stickdorn, M (2013) This is Service Design Thinking, Wiley.
4. Won, M (2012) A Study on Roles of the Community Design in Crime Prevention: Focusing on Project called Root out Crime by Design in South Korea, World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology.
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6. Public Administration Select Committee (2008). User Involvement in Public Services, House of Commons: 37.

The background of the slide features a series of light blue, wavy, curved lines that create a sense of movement and depth. These lines are layered, with some appearing more prominent than others, giving the overall design a modern and abstract feel.

OPEN

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