

Design and communication for local development: technological decisions in collaborative scenarios.

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Design for development is an approach that tries to develop a new conceptual matrix in order to actively face the dissociation between technology and society. Our program, which is carried out at the **CAO Center** (Computer Aided Design Centre) of the University of Buenos Aires, sets in motion the experience of design, accompanying local communities in the unfolding of strategies of inhabitability linked to axes of local development: water and sanitation, territorial rooting, creation of satisfactory work, reconstruction of the productive fabric, food safety, peace and governance, accessibility of the vulnerable communities to the cultural circuits.

The notion of “accompaniment” describes the attitude in which the University takes on its role as an agent of development, exploring new roles, prospecting and developing new categories and analytical criteria, new readings of the problems, which contribute ways of viable and sustainable solutions

Our project thinks the designer as a social animator, as an agent of technological change, who makes it possible to develop a technological-, product-, and communication-culture, starting with an animation device based on the web 2.0, which articulates, connects and/or communicates the requirements, needs and/or resources of the territory where it is located, with other social networks in other geographies. The working unit on the territory is the “neighbourhood”, its identity, its idiosyncrasy, culture, resources: physical, material, and above all, human -the latter articulated by the use of web technology.

We go from the tangible design (object), to the intangible (information), understanding for of individuals and/or groups of individuals, institutions, official organisms, NGOs. We understand the territory as a complex systems that emerge as a result of the actions and interaction, in which the *local knowledge* is vital. In our experience on the territory, the transfer or socialization of knowledge is the unit of analysis which re-locates and re-defines technique within the context of sustainable local development, favouring its appropriation by the emerging communities. This technology is based on this : on the possibility of interaction and collaboration in the production of contents, the person shifts from a status of spectator-consumer to generator-organizer of contents. The model is developed taking as a basis the social relationships, the interrelationships among people, and on a higher degree, the social classes, in a sense of mutual collaboration and generation of contents and information, knowing that any network requires continuous flows in order to persist.

The power of individual authorship is decentralized, and it migrates towards a social collaborative environment (free software), where there is a force of collaborators

geographically scattered, but virtually concentrated on the development of this animation device. The intelligent combination of technology and design with a local approach promotes *ephemeral* solutions, in the sense of them being *light*, cheap and effective, for the most diverse problems. Besides, and not less important, ephemeral technology, because of its lower cost and faster speed in reaching its objectives, allows favouring the initiative in a small scale based on micro-entrepreneurs, where the articulation with other networks will constitute its strength.

We describe an experience which presents a repository of civic initiatives regarding water and sanitation in the basin of the Matanza-Riachuelo river, which brings the organizations of the Civil Society together with the University, in order to promote and vindicate the technological and methodological contributions of small-scale solutions, as opposed to the criterion that favours, in an excluding way, large interventions generated from the state bureaucracies.

New technological criteria to approach the problems of water and sanitation converge in this scheme with new criteria of information design, upon the basis of devices that are participative, horizontal (non-hierarchical), ephemeral and low-cost.