Live project analysis

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The Foxholes Village Hall live project is about making use of the limit fund, the present sites to build a sustainable building. Through the process, I learned the way of exploring the different possibilities of solving a problem, which strengthened my ability of practical design, after attending the management and practice module, I have some deeper realizations about the project.

- The development of the brief throughout the project
- The briefing process, and how this might have been improved

Stage1   At the beginning, Evan gave us drawings of the three sites about locations, access, visibility for a quick understand, and all the group members did some research about English village hall, what is it used for, how it can get people together and what is the natural conditions of the Foxholes Village etc. Then we went to the village to have a meeting with the represent of the village council Steive, She told us that the village was renewed by 10 years ago, because of there is no clear ownership of it, it has not been well kept and used. Now half of the villagers (totally 180 people) want to have a new village hall where they can have party, committee meeting, sewing class, children playing, British tea etc, otherwise "The village will die". However they were only funded by 30000 pound which is far less than what was needed, and the channels for gaining money are so limited, the consuming cost after built would be quite a lot. So "the money" and "the sustainable" became two big problems. Then our group was divided into three subgroups , each group did some survey on the each site: Site A measure and record the old village hall whose rebuilding may be a save for money ; Site B measure and record the church which has a potential to be used as a village hall; Site C record the plants and the pond which shaped a good environment for new village hall.

At this stage, I think we understand the clients' requirements clearly, and know clearly what we could do. However the users will not only be the client, we did not engage the villagers into the discuss meeting, it's a mistake. Before going to the Foxholes, everyone already had some questions about the village hall, if we had shared these questions or interests, and designed them into an activity or an event, that would be helpful to know more about the users, to the development of the proposal.

Stage2   On group meeting we discussed and concluded the issues into a "To do list": environment, materiality, infrastructure and money. In each group, one person analyzed the advantages and disadvantages of the site, one person made the 3d model, one person research into the sustainable technologies. I think it is an interesting

process because everyone did some job, for example I looked up the stuff about wind turbine, ground source heating pump, water harvest etc, and then we shared the results, all can get knowledge from others.

At this stage, the work of the technology has overlaps, each group did some work about this repeatedly, it can be seen a kind of waste. In my opinion, the reason for this is we did not understand the relation between the issues of environment, material and each site, some of them can applied to all the three like cheap and sustainable materials but some of them are site specific. For example, the site A is suit for applying the solar technology because of the roof pitch along the N-S axis. Maybe more diagrams would help us to clarify these relations between each job, what can be improved is that we need organize the job effectively.

Stage3   We have a group meeting to discuss the time line for our schematic design, production and the presentation for our proposals, each one got some work for the whole group's issues and one proposal for the subgroup, it ensured that we covered as many as the possibilities, someone took charge in e-mailing Steive.

During this period, I found that if the work is distributed to a certain person, it is easier to finish compared to distributed to a few people.

Stage 4   We documented the proposals and prepared for the "Community Day". In order to drive the building of the new village hall, we ran an activity to present our proposals to the villagers, produced a board to get villagers' opinions. Although that day is a raining day, quite a few villagers came to the event, when they saw our proposals, they expressed their strong will to build a new village hall. They agreed to choose site C as a place, because they thought it would provide a playground for the children and a natural environment for people getting together.

From community day, I found the villagers' interests to engage, I think if we can hold such activity at the beginning, we can know what their preference were , that would make our design more purposeful. I also noticed that they were not interested in hearing impersonal state, but would like to discuss with us. I read '' Favor strategies that involve the audience over strategies that only inform them ''from Washington State Enterprise Architecture Program Communications Plan, which is their communication principle.(1)Then I think the face to face communication is a good way to exchange ideas with the users, before doing the presentation, we should design what questions should we cover and how to get their feedback. If the questions are open, we can get feedback which can be used into design.

- Group working – how successful this was and how it may have been improved?

Our group was composed of 5th year students, Chinese Maad students and Singapore students, so the language barrier became a big problem. To solve it, we emailed meeting minute to make everyone understand the brief, it is a good way to communicate. However, during the discussion, English students spoke fast, sometimes Chinese students could not express their opinions. I think it can be improve that the speed of discussion can be slow down so that we can consider the issues carefully and organize well.

- Communication strategies: methods of communication with the client and stakeholders, and how these may have been improved.

Because they were lack of money for the project, they were not eager to drive the project go. Sometimes as architecture students we should play a role of catalyst, use our schematic design to promote the project's development. As what we did, we email the client once a few days so that they can see the results of that time as soon as possible.

I think if we can use telephone to communicate, it will be more direct, easier to understand, because people who did not learn architecture can't understand the drawing language. However, compared to the word documents, from the community day event, I also found that the drawings work better than the documents, because they are more visual.

- What lessons may be learnt from the live project that might be valuable to professional architectural practice and via versa.

Firstly, I learn how to plan the process of project develop. From the site survey to site analysis to research into related aspects, from proposal design to report to the client then to getting feedback, how is it going on depends on how an architect understand the project. You may think the clients need some professional advice, or you may think they need some driving force to promote things. What you think important decides the way you doing the project. "John Zachman's argument that you have to plan before you do and that you need a view across the whole enterprise is compelling." (2)I read this from a website which topic is enterprise architecture management style, and also from the management module, I learned to make a vision for project.

Secondly, I get some learning of organize the job in a team. You should know clearly about the relation between each job, which contains another and which relates another, so that the carrying process is effective.

Thirdly, I understand the importance of communication with client, at the same time, I should pay attention to the communication techniques.

Lastly, I learned how to integrate technology and material knowledge into a practical design, judge things according the precise analysis and research.

Reference
1 Washington State Enterprise Architecture Program Communications Plan
http://www.dis.wa.gov/enterprise/enterprisearch/CommunicationsPlan.doc

2http://chiefarchitect.squarespace.com/ea/2006/9/3/enterprise-architecture-management-styles.html