Urbanism Week 2012
Workshop briefing "How to engage citizens with the help of digital media"
Michiel de Lange - michiel@themobilecity.nl - www.themobilecity.nl
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Below are a number of possible cases to work on during the workshop. Participants will form teams of about 5 persons around one of these briefs.

The overarching aim is to use digital media technologies and principles in whatever form in the proposed design. The challenge is not only to use technologies but also to find out how to port collaborative principles from online culture to urban situations!
This can be in the process of gathering (new types of) information, in the creation of new networks of collaborators, enabling citizens to become active creators, in finding new financing, as part of the creative design process, as part of the proposed product or outcome, in the communication strategy, as a way to deal with maintenance, repair and repurposing, or in any other possible way you can think of.

We have very limited time, so the process will approx. look like this:

12:30 – 12:45 Introduction Michiel de Lange
12:45 – 12:50 Form teams around issues
12:50 – 13:00 In teams, identify main issue to tackle (analysis phase)
13:00 – 13:10 Analyze stakeholders are involved and take a perspective (analysis phase)
13:10 – 13:30 Generate ideas (brainstorming phase)
13:30 – 14:00 Select one idea and start developing a rough prototype (prototyping phase)
14:00 – 14:30 Plenary presentations

Possible cases to work on:

Vacant buildings
In many cities we find abandoned former schools, offices, factories and so on. While many cities attempt to create new locales for the creative crowds this does not always succeed.
Assignment: Can you think of possible strategies to rejuvenate these large empty buildings with the aid of digital media? Decide on an actual or imaginary case and develop a concept. Consider elements like stakeholders, type/character of the building, traffic, safety, embedding in neighborhood, relationship to similar projects, temporariness or long-term sustainability of concept.

Wastelands
Almost every city has barren wastelands without a clear destination. The top-down Dutch planning tradition of forming consortia between governments, investors and developers has entered a stalemate, so nothing is going to happen with most these plots anytime soon.
Assignment: Can you come up with alternative approaches for developing these
lands? Consider elements like stakeholders, legislation, financing, how to attract new groups/individuals, mix between private and public uses.

Shrinking Cities
According to statistics the worldwide urban population continues to grow. Yet many regions in western and eastern Europe, and north America, face projected or actual decline op urban populations. In the Netherlands it is projected that by 2025 over half of the municipalities will have a shrinking population.
Assignment: Can you think of ways to use digital media to address this issue? Consider elements like stakeholders, availability of urban services, economic livelihood, social contact, repurposing built environment.

Sustainable Food and Energy Production
Adequate water, food, and energy supplies are crucial resources for people in cities to thrive. Yet many cities have problems providing these services reliably. Attempts are made at experimenting with alternative, more active modes of production like urban farming, cooperative energy production.
Assignment: Pick a particular city in developing country and one specific resource, and come up with a proposal for organizing an alternative resource production and distribution. Consider elements like stakeholders, existing or new infrastructures and logistics, pricing schemes, engaging people with 'low interest goods'.

Mobility
Cities are about movement and flows as much as about more sedentary places like homes, offices, squares, and leisure

settings. Almost all cities have to cope with pervasive traffic jams and concomitant loss of economic value, air quality, playing grounds and so on; but also uncertainty involved in investing in expensive public transport infrastructures.
Assignment: develop a strategy for a particular situation to help tackle mobility issues. Consider elements like stakeholders, individuality and personal spaces, visualizing environmental impacts, behavioral change.

New Business Models
The present financial situation is rather dire for most architects, planners and urbanists. Old ways no longer generate income so new modes of developing projects have to be found. Some offices are experimenting with alternatives, often unsolicited, not commissioned. For example they look for alternatives to organize the design process, involve new parties, forge consortia with other professionals, tap into new financing e.g. crowdfunding, and so on.
Assignment: If you were to start your office tomorrow, what business approach would you like to explore in order to adapt to changing circumstances? What new way of working is most fit for what specific type of case? Consider conditions like shifts in acknowledging expert knowledge, changing roles of stakeholders like municipalities, investors, developers, banks, entrepreneurs, citizens/'prosumers', and so on.