their understanding of the infrastructure, movement systems, and land use patterns of a city precinct, as it is progressively re-shaped through different mapping scenarios.

Enmeshed in the process of urban design is the collection, processing and communication of analytical data, and the mechanism by which opportunities and ideas are synthesised and evaluated. While the approach outlined above should not replace the core workhorses of analysis and conventional workshops techniques, we believe that it can play a significant contribution if it is applied as a front end abstraction process in promoting effective workshop procedures. In addition, with further research and development, we also believe that integrating such a model with the outcomes produced by planners specialising in economic development, may have significant benefits when attempting to translate their research into the design and upgrading of major activity centres.

REFERENCES


END NOTES

(1) Disclaimer. The research presented in this paper is the informed opinions of the authors and should not be interpreted as representing the opinions of the professional practices referred to in the text.

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PROJECT BRIEFING AND CHANGE-RESPONSIVE FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

The paper explores the potential for project briefing to serve as a catalyst for organisational change, and describes the development of a briefing procedure for a university student services facility intended to be used in this way. Effective involvement of facility end users is identified as a key feature, and impediments to achieving this in the context of workplace change are then examined. A model for the briefing process is proposed which seeks to minimize these impediments and to promote opportunities for innovation and change in both workplace practices and the work environment. The application of this model in the development of a two phase process for project briefing is outlined. The paper then identifies the role of the facilities management discipline in change management processes within work organizations, and concludes that facility managers are ideally positioned to initiate and oversee project briefing procedures that promote changes in work practices.

Keywords

Project briefing, user participation, workplace change, facilities management.

INTRODUCTION

The process of design inquiry (of which briefing constitutes a preliminary phase) offers a potent opportunity for existing work practices to be critically evaluated, and for alternative practices to be explored. While the relationship between human activities and the physical settings in which they occur can never be a deterministic one, nevertheless there are grounds for accepting that appropriate changes to settings may stimulate changes to work practices. Horgan (2001, p.61) cites evidence that “transforming the workplace supports the transformation of work itself”. She observes that the involvement in the design process of those with first hand knowledge of the particular work practices may be sufficient to prompt what she refers to as a 'spill-over effect', even to the extent of radically changing the workplace culture. This is a potentially significant observation, since it points to the opportunity for project briefing to be deliberately structured in order to initiate such changes. Becker (1990, p.125) also supports such a view when he observes that "excellent briefing processes go beyond simply collecting information about user, equipment, or space requirements. They can also act as a form of organisational development". Barrett and Baldry (2003, p.111) suggest that the "actual process of collecting briefing information may raise users' awareness of their situation", with the logic (or lack of logic) of existing work practices being questioned as a consequence.

However, it should be emphasized that the nature of the work organisation itself will, to a large degree, determine the extent to which this potential may be realized. Dewulf and van Meel (2003, p.264), in their review of three major approaches to user involvement in the design process, note that organisations with a strongly hierarchical culture typically adopt a top-down approach to project briefing, in which the client and facility designer communicate with each other, without significant user involvement. To the extent that changes to work