

Practice of Community Architecture:
A Case Study of Zone of Opportunity Housing Co-operative,
Montreal

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Abstract

The Community Architecture Movement, which started in the UK during mid-1970s, advocates the participation of communities in decisions affecting their built environment. Despite its success as an effective means of achieving meaningful physical and social development for the end-users, Community Architecture does not enjoy wide acceptance at the professional, institutional or governmental level. This report emphasizes the effectiveness of this approach in projects concerning communities by presenting the concept and evolution of Community Architecture using existing literature followed by a study of the practice of a community-based housing project in Montreal called the Zone of Opportunity Co-operative. A community comprising young mothers was involved in all the stages and their struggles during the chosen project are highlighted in this report. The report presents a step-by-step account of the process, the roles of different actors and their interrelationship within each stage of the project and an analysis of this approach in achieving substantial development. The study demonstrates the resourcefulness of ordinary individuals in the realization of this project in spite of several obstacles encountered during its course. This report also shows that regardless of the complex, time consuming and demanding nature of the process, the physical, personal and social benefits for the community members achieved as a result of the chosen project surpassed all these challenges.

Résumé

Le mouvement de l'architecture communautaire, conçu au Royaume Uni dans les années 70, supporte la participation de communautés dans la prise de décisions par rapport à leur cadre construit. Néanmoins le succès de cette idée comme moyen prime qui engendre, à travers l'environnement bâti, une pertinence physique et sociale aux usagers, l'architecture communautaire est reçue d'une façon peu positive au sein des professionnels, des institutions ou du gouvernement. Ce rapport met l'emphase sur l'efficacité de cette approche concernant les communautés en présentant le concept et l'évolution de l'architecture communautaire, en étudiant les textes reliés au sujet et en présentant le cas échéancier du projet de logement communautaire situé à Montréal, la Coopérative Zone d'Opportunité. Une communauté de jeunes mères a participé au projet dans tous ces stages et leurs défis figurent dans ce rapport. De plus, le rapport présente étape par étape le processus lui-même, le rôle des divers acteurs et leur interrelation dans chacun des phases du projet, avec une analyse de cet approche comme moyen de développement. Cette étude démontre la créativité d'individus ordinaires qui sont impliqués dans la réalisation d'un projet sans se soucier du nombre de défis. Ce rapport démontre aussi que malgré la complexité du projet, un horaire allongé, et l'exigence du processus, les bénéfices physiques, personnels et sociaux pour la communauté et ses membres, surpassent tous les défis.

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List of Abbreviations

AA	Architectural Association School of Architecture
ARCH	Architects Renewal Committee in Harlem
CBIP	Commercial Building Incentive Program
CDLC	Conseil du Developpement du Logement Communautaire
CDW	Community Design Workshop
CED	Community Economic Development
CHFC	Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada
CLC	Canada Lands Company
CMHC	Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
CQCH	Confédération québécoise des coopératives d'habitation
DFID	Department for International Development
FRAPRU	Front d'Action Populaire en Réaménagement Urbain
GEBF	Green Energy Benny Farm
GMF	Green Municipal Fund
Groupe CDH	Groupe Conseil en Développement de l'Habitation
GRTHM	Groupe de Ressources Techniques en Habitation de Montreal Inc.
HCNDG	Communautaires Notre Dame de Grace
H & H	Head and Hands
L'OEUF	L'Office de l'Eclectisme Urbain et Fonctionnel
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology

MPCC	Milton-Park Citizen's Committee
NDG	Notre Dame de Grace
QPIRG	Quebec Public Interest Research Group
SAR	Stichting Architecten Research
SODECM	Société de Développement Communautaire de Montréal
UCL	University College London
YPP	Young Parents Program
Z.O.O.	Zone of Opportunity Housing Cooperative