

A towards a framework for urban to co-design processes: The use of visual arts methods in an Action Research through Design in Chile

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With the urgency to adapt cities to climate change impacts, a collaborative approach to design can play a crucial role in integrating public, private, and citizen actors towards urban transformations. We understand public spaces as socio-ecological systems that unfold spatially and functionally. However, the design of public space is a complex task for people who are not used to it. Visual arts methods may facilitate decision-making offering an additional language in which actors can communicate. We developed a co-design framework to analyse how visual art methods contribute to such processes throughout the three commonly distinguished design phases. Adopting an Action Research through Design approach, we participated in two co-design processes in a city in the Atacama Desert in Chile. Visual arts methods are known to facilitate collaboration early in design. This article shows that they are also useful in the embodiment, and detail phases. They can facilitate collaboration in the steps of research, analysis, projection and selection throughout the complete process. We conclude that visual arts methods can be used in a wide diversity of co-design activities that can be mapped in our framework. We conclude that co-design processes should be analysed in the long-term as a sum of collaborative activities. The framework aims for conceptual clarification, and may also contribute to planning and undertaking such processes in practice. Although the cases are framed in Latin America; findings may be useful elsewhere.

Palabras clave: Arts methods; co-design; co-design process; public space; urban co-design; visual arts methods