THE ‘URBAN DEVELOPMENT GAME’ IN ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

MOODLE AS A PEDAGOGICAL FACILITATOR

TO SIMULATE URBAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES

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THE ‘URBAN DEVELOPMENT GAME’

AN EXPERIMENT IN ALTERNATIVE TEACHING / EDUCATION WITH THE USE OF MOODLE

SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE, ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI, 2017-18 - SPRING SEMESTER

PRE-GRADUATE COURSE: ‘ISSUES IN SPATIAL PLANNING’ - OBLIGATORY COURSE - 6TH SEMESTER STUDENTS
URBAN PLANNING/ URBAN DESIGN

→ an interdisciplinary field / studies & organizes human activities in space

→ a political practice / defines social, economic, cultural and ecological parameters of urban and spatial development

→ a field of controversy, which is constantly shaped by complex stakeholders’ interactions in decision making and implementation processes

• Aim of the course: understanding of contemporary dimensions of spatial planning issues - highlight the areas of activity and the roles of urban planners, designers and architects among other stakeholders
URBAN GAMES IN PLANNING/ ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

→ simulations of real world processes in urban development through case study research and role play

→ techniques for evaluating consultation/decision making processes of specific projects as they evolve in practice

→ simulations of gamification techniques in practice to involve actors and enrich planning/ design results through bottom-up processes
• a standard educational framework, used since the 1960s
• forgotten & revived through ITC smart tools
• address issues of new arising urban governance processes & urban informality
• familiarize students with issues not yet charted in theory
• prepare students for the fast changing real world of practice

THE ‘URBAN DEVELOPMENT GAME’ – ORGANIZATION DETAILS

• Number of students in course catalogue: 207/active:167/ used Moodle for the game: 67 → They selected to be evaluated alternatively to written exams through their participation in the ‘game’ and report writing.

• Main interface: specially designed Moodle/e-learning area added in the conventional top-down e-learning course page (course info, content, program, course material, announcements, etc.)

• Duration of alternative Moodle/e-learning usage by the students for the game: during the whole semester (course framework and exercise guidelines, participation, interface, interim uploads, internal evaluation, final report upload)

• Human resources required to run the game for the students (implementation organization, coordination & follow-up): 2 members of teaching staff (professors) + 2 PhD Candidates
THE ‘URBAN DEVELOPMENT GAME’ EVOLVES...

Here’s how we did it!

GAME OBJECT: URBAN DEVELOPMENT OF 6 CURRENT PROJECT SITES IN THESSALONIKI

→ 6 parallel/ separate games of common rules / guidelines:

WATERFRONT – Municipality of Thessaloniki
WATERFRONT – Municipality of Kalamaria
WATERFRONT – Municipality of Thermaikos
WATERFRONT – Municipality of Delta
International Fair of Thessaloniki
Pavlos Melas former military camp
THE ‘URBAN DEVELOPMENT GAME’ EVOLVES...

7 GAME STEPS & eLearning SECTIONS for each site

1. SITE FILE: COMPILATION OF SITE INFO
   - SITE SELECTION & GROUPING
   - GAME LAUNCH

2. ROLE ASSIGNING
   - FORUM 1: INTRODUCING ROLES & THEIR AGENDAS
   - CONSULTATION PROCESS

3. CONSULTATION PROCESS
   - FORUM 2: DEVELOPMENT ISSUES AT STAKE
   - LIVE CONSULTATION ROUND-TABLE

4. SITE REPORT UPLOAD + FEEDBACK

MOODLE TOOLS USED

- Group creation: Grouping of participants
- Database Creation via upload form
- Learning forum: Participants’ posts
- Learning Forum: Participants’ discussion in separate strings
- Upload Area creation + Questionnaire creation
GAME STEP / SECTION 2: SITE FILE:Compilation of Site Info

Participants:

- research their topic, site and development processes

- compile relevant information (articles, policies, regulations, studies, plans etc) coming from various sources (press, internet, responsible authorities)

- using a predesigned form to fill in, they upload info:
  1. a list of stakeholders/actors in the development
  2. separate files (docs, links, images)

➔ All uploaded entries compile a common shared database
GAME STEP / SECTION 4: FORUM 1: INTRODUCING ROLES & THEIR AGENDAS

Participants, after having been assigned a role (e.g. developer, planner, citizen, NGO rep, mayor etc)

- Introduce themselves

- Argue for their agendas in relation to the site development

GAME STEP / SECTION 5: FORUM 2: DEVELOPMENT ISSUES AT STAKE

Each participant, poses a major critical question or issue at stake related to the site development which all other roles have to respond to, by replying and supporting their arguments with words and attached posts (docs, links, images)

- The on-line discussion/ consultation evolves in separate strings starting from the initial questions
THE ‘URBAN DEVELOPMENT GAME’ EVOLVES...

GAME STEP / SECTION 6:  LIVE CONSULTATION – ROUND-TABLE

Participants take stand, play their informed roles and agendas, in structured live discussion rounds.
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GAME STEP / SECTION 6: LIVE CONSULTATION – ROUND-TABLE

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PARTICIPANTS’ / STUDENTS’ FEEDBACK

48/67 students answered the questionnaire of 14 questions and 1 open discussion entry.

→ During which game step did you experience advancement of your understanding of the site urban development processes?

Step 2_Site info compilation – literature review (2,17 %)
Step 2_Site info compilation – Internet research (13,04 %)
Steps 4-5_On-line consultation Learning Forums (15,22 %)
**Step 6_ Live consultation (50,00 %)**
Step 7_Report writing (19,57 %)
PARTICIPANTS’ / STUDENTS’ FEEDBACK

Main AUTh Diploma Supplement criteria for gained skills during their participation:

• Applied their knowledge in practice (50.00 %)
• Researched, analyzed and synthesized data and info by using suitable technologies (69.57 %)
• Adapted in new situations (41.30 %) & Decision making (50.00 %)
• Autonomous work (45.65 %) & Team work (67.39 %)
• Interdisciplinary work (30.43 %)
• Production of new research ideas (30.43 %)
• Respect to the natural environment (52.17 %)
• Being critical and self-critical (69.57 %)
• Enhancement of open, creative and inductive thinking (56.52 %)
PARTICIPANTS’ / STUDENTS’ FEEDBACK

• 85.4% thought the game was a very informative or constructive learning experience.
• 93.33% thought that the game should be part of the curriculum of architectural studies.
• In terms of their personal development, 43.48% thought the game gave them the chance to organize their choices according to priorities by juxtaposing different values and conflict resolution.
FINAL RESOLUTIONS

• A very interesting, enjoyable and constructive teaching experiment & learning experience that grasped the attention and commitment of students

• It enhanced team work, collective (between students) and horizontal (between students and professors) sharing of knowledge.

• It reinforced dialogue, critical thinking and democratic processes in perceiving urban development processes.

• It shifted students’ perceptions towards a global comprehension of urban development processes and results (their report writing proved more mature than in previous years)

• Students realized their role (architects/planners) as agents of change in the development process
Final Resolutions

The ‘urban development game’ created a positive rumor for the course in the School. Students the next year asked for it!

- Moodle acts as a highly valuable and flexible facilitator to enhance new interactive pedagogies

- BUT

- Gamification requires more resources than conventional teaching, in terms of human resources, time and effort to design, implement and run the game.

- SO

- We did not repeat it..., due to the restricted availability of time and human resources, and due to the vast number of students in relation to teaching staff in Greek university obligatory courses.
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