The role of the design artefact in hospital briefing and design work

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Paper Overview

• what role do design artefacts play in hospital briefing & design work?
• what effects do they have?
• how do people relate to them?
• how do they work and why?
• can insights can be gained into PFI project dynamics from analysis of design artefacts?

• focus on: artefacts used between the client & designer
  • post-it notes; schematics; physical models; BIM; CAVE; video fly-throughs; artistic images; power point presentations, etc.
• important role played: used to mediate discussions & conceptualize design
Analysis: semiotics

- semiotics: study of signs & sign systems (Innis, 1986)
- multiple messages & meanings conveyed by signs & sign systems
- symbolic, functional, semiological, organisational meanings
- strengths & limitations of different artefacts
- design artefacts critical to hospital project process evolution
Theory: Eco`s model-reader

- signs function through shared interpretation & understanding
- interpretation & meaning of artefacts significant in project story
- cognitive interpretation of artefact affects subsequent attitudes/behaviour
- not all meanings predictable
Semi-structured interviews
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACTOR</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>POTENTIAL EFFECT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COST/PRICE</td>
<td>What monetary cost is there in creating/formulating/mobilizing the design artifact?</td>
<td>Expensive artifact (e.g. physical model) can seriously affect budgets whereas sketch drawings/tracing paper cheap and easy to use.</td>
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<tr>
<td>INTERACTIVE OR NOT</td>
<td>Clients arguably prefer engagement with artefacts of design (e.g. BIM). How interactive is the artifact from client perspective?</td>
<td>Engagement with client seen as critical. Interactive artefacts can positively affect the briefing experience from both sides.</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRACTICALITIES</td>
<td>How practical is it to use the design artifact? (e.g. time to produce; portability; technical issues; need for collective agreements)</td>
<td>Not possible to use in client offices (CAVE); too big to travel (physical model); design team validation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>VALUE OF USE</td>
<td>Does the design artifact have further use in briefing phase and beyond it? (e.g. BIM) Does artifact ease designer work?</td>
<td>Can influence designer choice significantly. A utilitarian artifact may be preferred.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appropriateness</td>
<td>Is it appropriate to use a certain design artifact at a certain time in the briefing phase?</td>
<td>Incorrect artifact use can negatively affect dynamics (e.g. use of BIM too early in dialogues; presentation of artist impression too early).</td>
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<td>Intelligibility</td>
<td>How easy is the artifact for the client to engage with? Is a lengthy explanatory preamble needed?</td>
<td>Using complex artifact may confuse/annoy client (not good). Predicting interpretation of artifact very important in client briefing/design meetings.</td>
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Artefacts work in complex project contexts: multiple artefacts, authors & readers
Review

• artefacts critical to briefing & design process

• can be semiotically analyzed for:-
  - properties (“constitution”) of artefact influence data conveyed
  - denoted & connoted meanings
  - professional cognitive frameworks of understanding
  - personal cognitive frameworks of understanding

• “meanings” attached to different artefacts can be gleaned through interviews with design professionals & the client
• cognitive frameworks of understanding can be understood more

• artefacts do not work in isolation but within bigger context

• design artefacts drive forward briefing & design but also & control it
Questions & thoughts?

• general thoughts about the research?

• what does work tell us about bigger story of briefing & design on PFI hospital projects?

• research directions to take from the study?

• how to learn more about specific artefacts in action?

References
