Statement of the Jury, Archicamp 2013 (Woelab, Lome) 10-Aug-2013

Congratulations to all participants and supporters for a dynamic and courageous Archicamp 2013! Thank you for the invitation to Lome and Woelab — West Africa's first RepLab.

The entire group deserves citation for this initiative to empower people to transform their living environment through technology. The results of this year's Archicamp — built on the conceptualization of a year ago, and building toward actualization one year hence — validate the model, supported by Woelab, of an African urban environment which brings together traditional knowledge and the ethics of hacker culture.

We applaud your dedication to the project of organizing youth in a pan-African context to meld craftsmanship with locally-fabricated tools for the digital age. We commend l'Africaine d'Architecture for the _Hub Cité_ initiative and its visionary effort to show the transformative power of "low-high tech". The level of production and quality of architectural concepts presented by all three groups, at the conclusion of the three weeks-long collaboration of this year's Archicamp, deserves special mention.

Orange team: _Most practical construction_
We find this project to be an imaginative concept for reprogramming an existing node of social interaction by means of a series of small-scale interventions. In particular, we appreciate both the clear narrative concept and strategy for using kiosk-size architecture to connect citizens with their city through technology. Because of the scale of intervention — which allows prototyping at low cost — we consider this project to be buildable. We are intrigued by the approach to technology transfer (i.e. "hole in the wall") but would recommend customization across parameters of site, culture and climate.

Grey Team: _Most developed architecture_
We believe that the architectural concepts in this scheme achieved the highest level of articulation and for this reason commend the entire team. The focus on recycling and waste management especially has real potential for affecting change in Lome's urban environment. While the project explores themes of weaving via the cultural referent of the woven baskets commonly used for trash collection, further study is required to extend this line of investigation into "woven" techniques of construction. Examining both the tactile and tectonic implications of weaving — as well as opportunities for converting trash into building materials — may also suggest new possibilities for making the scheme more efficient, architecturally, by leveraging mixed-use and multi-purpose spaces to reduce overall built-up area and by designing for environmental behavioral changes.

Green Team: _Most ecological building_
We appreciate the degree to which this project combines architecture with landscape to upgrade the social and environmental performance of the site. Based on a well-informed understanding of the community and its composite needs, the team successfully identified the value of linking local constituencies of fishermen and university students through the energy and capacity for education and training that a makerspace enables. However, we offer that further integration of building and environment may create a more dynamic architectural language that can better translate needs of the community into design. The literal and figurative aspects of the fishermens' net specifically, as demonstrated during the review, is worthy of additional consideration and may also reveal ways in which the intervention can address a larger and more complex set of issues and stakeholders.

Recommendation of the Jury:
As the participants and organizers of Archicamp 2013 look forward to building the first node of _Hub Cite_ next year, we recommend taking the best ideas of all three projects and (re)combine them at smaller scale. In our estimation, the greatest strength of the initiative is that it seeks to produce an urban interface that connects people with technology, in order to amplify their interaction with(in) the city. Thus it is critical not only to scale individual architectural interventions correctly, but also to maintain the larger vision of reprogramming the entire city: Ultimately, the project is "global" in that it should be able to unfold simultaneously across many sites in Lome and beyond. If the goal, then, is to make manifest a popularly digital urban environment, then leveraging the power of demonstrating technology, "weaving" architecture, making "nets" and integrating architecture and landscape should prove ground-breaking.

As the jury of Archicamp 2013, we propose that along-side the twin pillars of culturally-informed craftmanship (art of making) and socially-conscious hacker ethics (make better and share how), next year's initiative can most gain from this year's by calibrating prototypes to the size of micro-architecture conceived as open-source electronic devices. We contend that the _Hub Cite_ project is profoundly important for Togo, West Africa and the continent at large — and eagerly anticipate the pan-African retro-future that Archicamp continues to realize.

Sincerely,

Dr. Yasmine Abbas   DK Osseo-Asare
Professeur Associé, Ecole Spéciale d'Architecture   Principal, Low Design Office
[neo-nomad.net]   [lowdo.net]