

involving community in design

Involving community actors in the design of a flood management plan is a critical first step in building community resilience; and a well designed and executed plan offers training or technical skills, local employment and leadership opportunities. Involving diverse individuals at an early stage of flood management planning, can ensure ongoing involvement and help address potential resistance to new approaches to flood risk reduction.

VIDEOS:



Ciliwung River (Indonesia)

Local organizer, Bang Kodir engages youth and proposes to turn Jakarta's most important river into an eco-park.



A Floating Future (Bangladesh) Mohammed Rezwan is a sustainability architect whose floating schools and gardens offer a practical solution to flooding.



To the Main Land (Panama)

Indigenous organizer Blas Lopez works with local architects to redesign his island community on higher grounds.



Beyond the Built (USA)

Artist Michael Singer with Planner Jason Bregman are re-designing waterfront infrastructure to co-exist with coastal ecosystems and are forced to confront reluctant neighbors.



Surrey: Planning for the Future (Canada)

Engineer Carrie Baron and City Planner Carla Stewart find visual methods to indicate future flood risks and work with communities to plan ahead.

ACTIVITY:

Give everyone old newspapers and the simple instruction “make the highest tower possible.” The objective of the exercise is to think “outside the box” and for the group to solve a problem in a short period of time (hint: the group can use both the newspapers and each other to build height). Give the group 15-minutes to build the tower. Afterwards, facilitate a discussion about what the group learned from this exercise that might be relevant to collaborative design. How did they communicate as a group? How did they resolve differences in approach? What new reflections do they have about group dynamics and diverse methods of accomplishing a task? What did each participant notice about their own approach to a collaborative endeavor? (Did they take initiative? Wait for instruction? etc)

QUESTIONS:

- What do you observe about community engagement in each of these videos? What challenges did you notice? Imagine and recount the “back story” of how engagement was fostered in one of the videos.
- What does flooding allow or restrict in your personal day to day life? How does flooding affect people differently? What are some visual ways to communicate the dangers of living in a flood zone? Why are hard structural methods often prioritized over soft structural methods? How can artists and engineers work together to shift people's perception of solutions to flooding?
- How might you involve community members in a collaborative design project? What kind of expertise would you seek out? What kind of challenges might you imagine? How might you work to address any resistance or challenges?

FACILITATION TIP: In every group there are those who are more or less confident about speaking in public. Break out groups ensure that more people participate. Drawing exercises are one form of drawing out diverse experience. Provide the group with colored pencils or markers and ask participants to “map out” community players in his/her community.