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A COMMUNITY ADVOCACY DEPOT FOR CHAMPAIGN COUNTYIntroduction

The poor communities of Champaign County, and particularly the Black community of North Champaign-Urbana, are concerned that they should have a significant voice in the rebuilding and redesigning of their environment. However, many of the problems that are faced by such people require technical knowledge in the fields of architecture, urban planning, engineering and even law and commerce. Such expertise is not normally freely available to poor communities and without it they are unable to propose new solutions for the problems of their environment or even to criticise solutions that are offered to them by outside agents.

The purpose of the Community Advocacy Depot, (C.A.D.) is, in very broad terms, to fill this need for professional and technical expertise. In Champaign-Urbana the greatest source for technical knowledge is quite clearly the University of Illinois and it is this resource that the C.A.D. intends to involve in the solution of the poor community's problems. There are three approaches that are central to the role of the C.A.D. It is an initiative that has come from the poor community itself and, since these are the people who will be most affected by any solutions to urban problems, control of C.A.D. must remain with the urban poor and minority groups. This will ensure that those who best know the problems will have a significant hand in molding the total environment to their particular needs and as an expression of their own life styles and aesthetics.

Secondly, to further ensure the appropriateness of technical solutions, those who supply such help will work within the C.A.D. in close collaboration and interaction with members of the poor community. This work will be carried on within the community at various depots set up within the districts considered for design. The first depot founded by C.A.D. is at 118 N. First Street, Champaign. By being actively involved with these problems the professional and technical experts will become more aware of the relationship of their expertise to human needs.

Thirdly, because the members of the poor community will be involved in the processes of redesigning and rebuilding their own environment they will become aware of the relevance of various technical skills. It is the intention of the C.A.D. to perform an educational function to help members of the poor community both to understand their environmental problems and the solutions and also to encourage interest in the courses available at State Universities.

The C.A.D. is deliberately unbureaucratic and flexible in that it intends to respond to whatever needs the poor community may have. It is, of course, a non-profit organization which can only survive if it is responsive to those it is trying to serve, can supply the necessary technical aid, and produces effective results.

A brief introduction can only serve to give the flavor of such a flexible and broadly based organization. The following pages will consider in greater detail the goals and functions of the C.A.D. and the methods it intends to use. Then the relationship of the C.A.D. to the poor community and to the University will be amplified. Finally the projects with which it is presently engaged will be described together with possibilities for future work.

The goals, functions, and methods of the C.A.D. are closely interrelated and interdependent. Consequently a description of its activities is in some senses bound to be repetitive. In order to clarify, as well as possible, the C.A.D.'s philosophy and approach we shall consider its actions in six roles.

- 1.) The C.A.D. as "problem finder".
- 2.) The C.A.D. as consultant in problem solution.
- 3.) The C.A.D. as consultant in solution implementation.
- 4.) The C.A.D. as "Teacher".
- 5.) The C.A.D. as it relates to the poor community.
- 6.) The C.A.D. as it relates to the University.

#### 1. The C.A.D. as "Problem Finder".

It should be clear that the premises of the C.A.D. are such that it considers that the setting of priorities between problems is the prerogative of the communities affected by the problems. Indeed the C.A.D. will at all times play a consultants role to the poor community. However, it will be one of the tasks of the C.A.D. to make itself aware and the poor community aware of the range and variety of problems with which it is faced.

Much of this aspect of communication between the C.A.D. and the poor community will be discussed in section (5). Here, however, we may note that there are specific ways in which C.A.D. will become aware of problems.

- 1) The C.A.D. is at present involved in presenting design solutions for one of the most pressing problems of north Champaign-Urbana. Through involvement with this problem, and the people it concerns, the C.A.D. automatically becomes aware of many related difficulties in the urban environment. It is one of the functions of the C.A.D. to be aware of and note any problems that it meets in the course of its work.
- 2) The C.A.D. will be run by a coalition of representatives from the poor community. Through these people problems will be presented to the C.A.D.
- 3) As part of its staff the C.A.D. will have a number of indigenous experts whose work will be to continually represent community points of view to the C.A.D. This work will necessarily entail the expert in developing contacts throughout all levels of the poor community.
- 4) As part of its activities the C.A.D. will conduct house to house canvassing to establish grass-roots involvement. It is at this level that C.A.D. may be able to learn of or perceive whatever problems there may be.
- 5) It will be part of the role of the C.A.D. to point out to the poor community the problems that are seen to be arising. The C.A.D. will also be able to offer its services in helping the community to decide upon priorities and problem solution. This role will be carried out through all channels of contact with the poor community.

Thus it can be seen that by being controlled by the poor community, the C.A.D. is part of that community and it will confront people on their own level with their local problems. In this way C.A.D. and the poor communities will develop a greater awareness of the problems that exist.

In the face of these problems groups from the poor community might approach C.A.D. to help them find solutions. Alternatively C.A.D. might advocate solutions to various problems and organize people around these issues in an attempt to overcome them.

## 2. The Role of C.A.D. in problem solving

The C.A.D. will at all times be concerned that any of problem solutions that it may help to find should be solutions that are acceptable to those for whom they are proposed. Thus part of the apparatus for problem solving is the community jury. If the C.A.D. is involved in suggesting solutions to problems it will wish to have these solutions commented upon by a jury from the poor community. Here the C.A.D. can be seen in the consultant type of role acting for its clients, the poor community.

There will be three major functions of the C.A.D. as a problem solver. Firstly, various groups and organizations from the poor community may request that C.A.D. act as consultants to them on various projects. Secondly, the C.A.D. may be employed to review solutions that are proposed for community problems by agencies outside of the poor community. Finally, the C.A.D. may, in the course of its work perceive problems and needs in the poor community and it will present solutions for these to the minority groups to stimulate comment, discussion and possibly action.

Solutions will be found by creating an environment within which technical experts and representatives and members of the black and poor white communities can interact to tackle problems.

- 1) Much of the technical and professional expertise will be recruited from the University of Illinois in that graduate students and faculty members will be attached to the C.A.D. If a specific skill is not immediately available from the staff of the C.A.D. they will be able to enlist the services of someone who has the necessary training.
- 2) The C.A.D. will also have knowledge of the other resources and services available to members of the poor community. Thus individuals or groups with specialized problems may be referred to existing social agencies etc. (e.g. legal aid).
- 3) The C.A.D. will have personnel from a broad range of fields: architecture, law, recreation, urban planning, social work, engineering, commerce, and so forth. These people will be available to work on any problem that comes up - in interdisciplinary teams if necessary, - and will thus be able to provide a comprehensive approach to problem solving.
- 4) In the process of problem solving these people will at all times be aided by, and be in consultation with, the indigenous experts and other members of the black or poor white community.
- 5) In order to produce meaningful solutions two processes of education must occur. Firstly, the professional and technical experts must be made aware of the particular needs, desires and life styles of their clients.

Secondly, the members of the poor community will be able to make a more significant input to solutions (and thus have greater control) if they understand the work and approach of each expert.

### 3. The Role of the C.A.D. in solution implementation.

Since the Black community and poor white community should have control over their own environment it is they who decide whether or not to implement a solution and make it reality. Thus implementation is a responsibility of the poor community. However, the C.A.D. is available to act in whatever role the poor community may require in order to further implementation. The C.A.D. can help in the following ways.

- 1) Identify Federal, State, or local agencies who might be responsible for providing requested services or who might be able to provide needed financial support.
- 2) Assist the poor community in making applications to agencies etc. for funding or other help.
- 3) Identify various means of getting action towards problem solution.
- 4) Assist the poor community in making contracts with private or public bodies to do work for the poor community.
- 5) To review and evaluate work done by contractors and other groups for the poor community.
- 6) It will also be part of the C.A.D. to advocate to the poor community the resources that are within the poor community itself and may be available to tackle problems.
- 7) In the course of implementation the poor community will need expert statements and advice for its dialogues with agencies, contractors, and others. The C.A.D. will be able to provide this.

### 4. The C.A.D. as "teacher".

As an entirely new venture the C.A.D. will provide a "learning experience" for everyone involved. It will, however, be aware of this process and try to enhance it in every way. There will be three broad sides to this activity. The first is to educate the technical and professional people in the desires and needs of poor black people and poor white people. The second is to help the poor communities become aware of the problems they have and the means available for their solution. The third aspect is to actively interest members of the urban poor in the various professions and in means of acquiring this expertise through school, college, and university.

Much of this training will occur as members of the poor community and the professions work together to produce problem solutions. More broadly, the C.A.D. newsletters and open meetings (discussed in (5) below) will be informative.

The C.A.D. will provide these specific educational services:

- 1) Members of the poor community may become involved in internships and job training programmes working on C.A.D. projects.

Thus high school students may find that they can contribute as draftsmen, participants in surveys, research assistants etc.

- 2) Curricula will be developed for introductory courses to various professions as they relate to urban problems. These will be available to schools and will be taught in classes within the community advocacy depots and the schools.
- 3) There will be class rooms at the C.A.D.'s where indigenous experts can discuss problems with professional and technical experts.
- 4) There will be presentations and lectures to community boards and juries.
- 5) Much of the publicity of the C.A.D. will be informative of the problems that exist and possible solutions.

5. The C.A.D. as it relates to the Poor Communities.

The success or failure of the C.A.D. depends to a large extent on its ability to be an agent of the poor Black and poor white communities - and to be effectively controlled by men in their own interests. Thus the C.A.D. will be concerned to develop contacts with all types of representatives in the poor communities. This will be accomplished in a number of ways:

- 1) The C.A.D. will establish a community newsletter to inform the poor community of problems that are arising, actions that are being taken, and C.A.D. activities.
- 2) The C.A.D. will advertise itself through social service agencies, local fraternal organizations, educational institutions, local news media and community papers and so forth.
- 3) In establishing a broad based representation for itself in the poor community the C.A.D. will be concerned to contact all those groups that are presently engaged in activities in solving urban problems. C.A.D. will hold open meetings to which such groups will be invited.
- 4) CAD. will also conduct door-to-door canvassing to elicit support from the poor white and poor Black community.
- 5) C.A.D. will encourage the formation of a board in the poor community to oversee its work.
- 6) The C.A.D. will always present any solutions it may find to meetings and forums. In this way it will be open to suggestions from any member of the poor community.
- 7) The role of the indigenous expert in opening and maintaining communication between Black people, the poor whites and the C.A.D. has already been expressed.
- 8) The C.A.D. will establish its depots in the areas within which it is working (i.e. scattered in North

Champaign-Urbana, Wilbur Heights, Barr Addition, etc.)

In this way more intimate contact can be established between C.A.D. and those people specifically concerned with the problems under review.

ix) Community juries and representatives will at all times judge the suitability of projects and solutions and decide upon action to implement etc. Thus, the consultant role of the C.A.D. is made clear and the position of the technical expertise in that it is controlled by the poor community.

#### 6. The C.A.D. as it relates to the University

In the community of Champaign-Urbana the University of Illinois is the largest resource of expertise available. While the C.A.D. does not rule out help from other sources of expertise, its immediate interest is in the University. Clearly the C.A.D. cannot function unless students and staff from the University are available to provide knowledge.

In order that the C.A.D. should be a permanent organization some permanent lines of communication have to be established with the University. Also, to ensure a consistent effort from professional and technical experts, there has to be some method in which these people work for C.A.D. on something more than a volunteer, spare time basis. The C.A.D. is approaching various colleges and departments within the University to obtain specific commitments from them related to their particular fields. However, some general mechanisms can be proposed.

i) Students who work on C.A.D. projects should be getting academic credit for their work at the depots. This will ensure a consistent effort.

ii) Certain members of faculty within each department should be detailed to act as permanent liason with C.A.D., supplying students etc. as the years go by.

iii) The University may be able to assist C.A.D. in writing proposals for research funds, funds for project studies, and internship or assistantship salaries.

The University will find that the C.A.D. can provide an extremely valuable learning experience for students. They will become directly involved in real life projects, the assesment of human needs, and the difficulties of putting theory intopractice. They will also become involved in interdisciplinary activities where they will learn the relationships of their specific discipline to others.

It will be clear that the success of C.A.D. depends on the type of commitment that the University makes and onthe suitability of this commitment as it fits in with the aims and philosophy of the C.A.D. In broad terms a commitment in terms of personnel and even, perhaps, money is needed. Yet this must be made in such a way that control of what the C.A.D. does, and of those who work there, remains firmly with the black and poor white communities. In this sense it is felt that those students who work for C.A.D. should work in the C.A.D.'s which are close to the community and not within the academic atmosphere of the University and its classrooms and studios.

### Present and Future Projects of C.A.D.

Many of the projects that C.A.D. is presently involved with are of a physical nature, however, there is a need for work in social areas and it is not intended that the work of the C.A.D. should exclude such projects. It will be noted that the list of future work includes projects on public parks & recreation, comprehensive planning, and other social services. The list of present and future projects presented below is intended purely as an indication of the type of work - it is not comprehensive.

#### Present Projects:

The C.A.D. has reviewed proposals for various housing projects in North-East Champaign:

i) Bradley Park Apartments - 116 units of housing for moderate income families under FHA 236 program - sponsored by the Northend Progressive Development Corporation and Interfaith.

ii) Turnkey I proposals for the development of 120 units of Public Housing by seven developers.

iii) Single family housing units under FHA 235 program.

All of these projects have been reviewed in the light of the needs of those families that will occupy them. The results have been made available to various financing agencies and sponsors involved.

#### On Going and Future Projects

i) The C.A.D. is making proposals for incorporation in the design of low cost housing units made with factory produced components.

ii) C.A.D. is to prepare a comprehensive plan, (physical, social and economic) for the Northern Section of Champaign-Urbana.

iii) C.A.D., in conjunction with facilities and expertise from the Civil Engineering Department of the University of Illinois, will produce a PERT analysis for the construction of a community shopping center.

iv) C.A.D. has advised and will advise tenants of housing projects on the formation of groups for self-help.

v) C.A.D. will prepare proposals for needed urban recreation centers and local parks.

The list of projects could go on but these serve to indicate the type of work that C.A.D. is presently involved with. The scope of operations of C.A.D. is limited by only two things. The interest that poor black and poor white communities have in tackling the problems of their environment, and the expertise and help that is made available by the University of Illinois. The concern of the poor community itself is well demonstrated by its existing groups and projects and by the establishment of the C.A.D. All that remains is the need for a firm and continuing commitment from the University of Illinois to support students and faculty in their part in C.A.D. Only with this can

C.A.D. go on to undertake the many and varied projects that the poor community will present to it.