Cathedral Place
a story about ‘site/space’ + participation

Ammon Beyerle with Urban Village Melbourne, Here Studio and The University of Melbourne

August 2009 - December 2011
**Title:** Cathedral Place / Close Over(p)lay

**Scope:** Research, design and activation to replace an on-ground carpark

**Budget:** None specified; $15-20M (conceptual)

**Location:** St Paul's Cathedral Close and Chapter House Lane, corner Flinders and Swanston Streets, Melbourne

**Client(s):** ‘The Schloss’, 196 Flinders St; St Paul’s Cathedral

**Participants:**

* Urban Village Melbourne (UVM);
* Here Studio;
* “The Community of Chapter House Lane” – St Paul’s Cathedral staff and congregation, homeless and or indigenous people on the site;
* The City of Melbourne;
* Property owners of ‘The Schloss’;
* Master of architecture and landscape architecture tutors and students of The University of Melbourne;
* 2010 and 2011 competition juries; and
* The general public

**Date:** August 2009 - December 2011

**Participatory Propositions**

Key modes of practice in RED

Communication

**Event**

**Governance**

Making

Material

**Process**

Space (occupation)
1. Aim of participation in Cathedral Place

   Context of Cathedral Place
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1. Aim of participation in Cathedral Place

Context of Cathedral Place

There is a flat, 60x30m asphalt carpark adjacent to St Paul’s Cathedral in Melbourne. This site sits in one of the most prominent positions in the city, opposite the main train station: Flinders Street, and the main city square: Federation Square – which is also the location of major arts and cultural institutions, and various cafés and events. Although it is sometimes used by a small number of cars, the carpark forms part of a public lane, and the broader site is a meeting place for homeless people and indigenous visitors to Melbourne.

Along one edge of the carpark the neighbouring building presents remnant shop windows in front of a cooking school, a loading dock and a small outreach centre. This building owner approaches Urban Village Melbourne (UVM), an interdisciplinary social enterprise, to investigate the site for activation through arts and events. In a somewhat unsolicited manner, the project continues through a community services grant, two design studios at the University of Melbourne and architectural services for the Surveyor of the Fabric.

Tensions in Cathedral Place

There are a number of interests for the site. These are conflicting desires between it continuing as a carpark, it developing into a public building or space, and it better accommodating homeless and indigenous people.

Over the past decade, the local Council are procuring an urban renewal strategy that has rapidly changed property values of the central business district of Melbourne through increased residential uses, street activation (cafés and shops), footpath widening and tree planting. This strategy follows a decade-long state government programme of privatisation and deregulation, large flagship projects, cuts to public housing provision, privileging private automobile...
transport and unbridling commercialisation of public spaces. Symptomatically, cultural values are somewhat keeping in tow; public engagement in political or spiritual institutions is diminishing, homelessness is increasing and general disadvantage amongst indigenous people is barely improving.

It is a challenge for the local stakeholders to acknowledge, discuss or work through the broad issues of developing the site. The perceived cost is beyond capital plans of the Gothic-transitional Cathedral and would imply day-to-day and broad impacts (on current lease agreements to provide parking) and likely lead to social exclusion. As a young and creative community group working in unsolicited ways through art and design, our practice UVM has little professional experience in such challenging projects, needs to navigate health and safety hazards, and must interact with established institutions, governance structures and people. Determining what to change and how to implement it is fraught, especially in the context of an iconic moral institution such as the Cathedral.

Opportunities to work through participation

On the site, one viscerally experiences that it is ignored, often unkept and uncomfortable. When prompted in conversation, its users or onlookers admit a sense of dissatisfaction and embarrassment with its state, yet offer sentiments that something should change and it is someone else’s responsibility. “It has been stuck for over a decade”; “I don’t know why”; “who owns it?”. On the flip side, at mention of an idea of change their eyes will light up, quickly give an opinion or alternative option and seek to affirm their role. “Imagine if it became…”; “What I’ve been thinking of for years is…”; “Yes; it’s a great site”.

Dreaming to reactivate, clean-up, beautify and develop the site, presents UVM various challenges that require many people to make changes. No one entity holds total information nor power. Architects and outsiders could offer future concepts to vision, think about and connect to. We offer situations to talk about, observe, encourage, question or debate the merits and meanings of design proposals. Our work would allow stakeholders to consider their own values and share them. In addition to building momentum, interacting in-situ with concepts and each other could help develop solidarity amongst participants – to explore the unknown, make the issues of the site explicit, and develop relationships and trust needed for more ambitious decisions and responsibilities. Participation might emphasise social values.

Overall trajectory of Cathedral Place

The project shifts from starting conversations, to developing spatial awareness, where people talk about issues and opportunities of the site through vision and physical aspects. A tangible sense of the project scope emerges and how challenging it actually is.
From Melbourne’s Federation Square, St Paul’s Cathedral Close is a curious little sanctuary of empty space nestled between many ornate, yet sombre façades. The two-tone sandstone Gothic transitional style Cathedral and mock neo-Gothic ‘Schloss’ is striking against the flat angled aluminium and scrolling LED text-striped Deconstructionist headquarters of the Special Broadcasting Service radio and television station. Bikes and umbrellas populate the fore and middle ground; in the background the Melbourne Central office tower and the Westin Hotel peak into the space.
2. To the North-East the Close is flanked by former shop fronts, glass-brick pavers, Victorian lamps and iron bollards. Chapter House Lane runs the length of the site leading up a flight of bluestone stairs and under the Chapter House through to Flinders Lane and a hotel valet. To the back, in a semi-detached two-storey building, the Dean’s office affords an outlook over the 1.5 to 2-dozen cars parked without lines and on remnant foundations of the previous church wall. Although the Cathedral presents a tall opaque façade at ground level, sunlight brightens most of the Close during the day.

3. Juxtaposing the renovated bluestone (ramp) entrance to the Cathedral, the entrance to the carpark sports a chained-link, fenced patch of grass, a young single tree and boom gates. It overlooks a busy intersection where every day hundreds of thousands of Melburnians cross to the ionic clocks entrance of the bright yellow, red and domed French Renaissance style, Flinders Street Station. In the background loom three skyscrapers built in the early 2000s, one residential, the other accounting-firms.

4. On the weekend wedding parties sometimes close the gates to take photos, uninterrupted before vintage cars and the steps of the undercroft, dressed in black suits and flowing white dresses. Similar photo-shoots occur a half-block away in the graffiti-soaked Hosier Lane.
5. The “about” page of Urban Village Melbourne Inc (UVM) describes the aims and principles of our little organisation. My participation in the story of the site began in August 2009 when I was invited to join UVM and lead the Cathedral Place project, by a former landscape architecture student. UVM started as a collective of mostly students, from The University of Melbourne, and The Victorian College of the Arts. We met regularly at the University, maintained a regular newsletter (“The Bulle[n]tin”) mailing list, and actively participated in roundtable discussions. Most of us were trained designers and artists. We aimed to discover how to create the public spaces we wanted in our city, through doing it and creating it in action, and bringing others along for the ride. One particular creative action we spoke about was ‘spatial activation’.

6. The cobbled bluestone laneway called Chapter House Lane connects Flinders Street up a flight of steps to Flinders Lane through a hole under a building: The Chapter House. That elevated and sheltered hole, ‘The Undercroft’, has often been a sleeping place for homeless people, where, for many years Anglicare has provided food and care to homeless people almost every weekday in the morning.
7. At night the undercroft is dark, and sometimes the iron gates are closed. A large concrete fire-stair interrupts them from ever being fully open. Across Flinders Lane the continuation of this path leads to Collins Street and the bright sparkling lights of luxury fashion brands and an opulently decorated theatre.

8. Spending some time on-site we find some of the small traces of different occupations: broken bottles, syringes and vomit Monday morning on the Dean’s doorstep; the traces of people, sleeping rough (folded blankets and cardboard), rubbish and marks left over from people eating, drinking and socialising on the site.

9. The crypt beneath is mostly empty and glass pavers allow some light to the kitchenette below. It is occasionally used for small events and storage.
2. Propositions for participatory design in Cathedral Place

What is the explicit concept and what elements were implicit?

Explicitly, the project is about site/space, and the proposal is that by activating participant focus on the physical aspects of the space itself, social cracks may be repaired and difficulties worked through in a hopeful manner. To find the cracks requires both architectural thinking and social engagement with the site. The idea is that by sharing both our amateur and professional methods demonstrates that the site is manageable, accessible and visible.

More implicitly the disjunctures of the broader site come to bear. Piles of blankets hide in the undercroft; rubbish, urine and vomit adorn the Dean’s door; and on the weekend, wedding photo-shoots interrupt public access to the laneway. Participation brings forward other models of governance, and questions how community morals might be practically integrated. Mobilising a series of conflicts, our focus on site/space intends to encourage others to approach difficult issues through means other than social confrontation.
**Process**

At first, the sequence of our activities are characterised by snowball meetings, one contact leading to another so that new questions, concepts and knowledge are reflected to the client. Because relationship building and connecting different positions are our priority, we switch patrons over time (neighbour, Cathedral, City, University, Cathedral). We structure activities incrementally with legitimacy, to assume greater risk and meaning later when more people are involved. Likewise, the design studios start with immersion exercises before detailed design. To open discussion, develop hope and trust(s) we work to become embedded and familiar with people.

**Event**

A key feature of important planned moments is that they are on-site. This included meetings, team workshops, teaching design studios and exhibiting final outcomes. The first project concept is to hold a lunch event for homeless, indigenous and Cathedral communities, to meet each other face-to-face and share food. We plan art installations as part of this for atmosphere and to open up thinking about space. The face-to-face and local nature of the events is paramount, so that actual issues are raised, transparent and socialised. We provide our activities legitimacy by formalising events, with food and inviting interesting guests.

**Governance**

The structure for organising ourselves and others intensifies as we encounter problems; this is particularly the case for ourselves. Attempting to acquit a community services grant and interact more formally with established and risky stakeholders, I spend months devising a decision-making and communication model of concentric circles with a central core team. I seek to effectively deepen roles of inside and outside, and impose hierarchy. We integrate this with a schedule of communications and meetings with participants outwards, and use social meetings and workshops as a practice to share concerns and role-play situations. Learning from this, with my co-tutor I structure the student interactions using a particularly strict syllabus.
From very early on we set ourselves to occupying the site. We speak about occupation as a creative act in itself and adopt an ethic that designers should engage themselves into an active relationship with a site – working on-site, not just overlooking it from outside as an ‘object of desire’. Sitting on the ground, watching and sensing what was going on we ask ourselves: “What do you think should happen here?” and “What should this site be?”
11. One of the simple activities I facilitate (recently adapted from the founder of Co-Design) was for each member of the team to first come up with three or so ideas that they wanted to happen on the site and write them down; then second to synthesise these, negotiating as a small break-out group of three into just three priorities, then third to come together as a whole project team, write all the group ideas down on a single page, then individually spend three votes on ideas by marking each with a coloured pen.

12. There are many exciting ideas: “open[ing] the Church [up]”; “greenification”, and “friendly surfaces”: some of the ideas are generic; “community installation space”, “expression [displays in the] windows”: some were more specific; “affordable housing”, “Federation Square crossing”: some are quite significant architecturally; “understanding conflicting uses”: some of them can be incorporated together; “sustainability icon”, “homeless roundtable”, “understand conflicting uses”: some are more process driven; and finally there is the radical idea of simply, a nice environment: “forest peaceful space”. As an experience, the activity demonstrates that even as a community group ostensibly aligned with similar values, we too will produce our own divergent (conflicting) ideas and will struggle to synthetically design it ourselves.

13. Our research through occupation includes mapping at different times and watching from inside neighbouring buildings whilst writing poetry.
Close Over(p)lay #2: St Paul’s Cathedral
STUDIO.cde.2011 Ammon Beyerle, Tim Derham and Richard Falkinger. Tuesdays 18-21/Thursdays 14-17

This on-site in-contact studio will investigate the design of public buildings in the context of heritage architecture in the city. The site demands a deeply contextualised and visionary proposal, as it sits on Flinders St, adjacent to St Paul’s Cathedral, opposite Federation Square and Flinders St Station.

Overlay? = OverPLAY
Heritage is not only a sensitive set of rules. Our masters studio will develop a sense of physical and social freedom, innovation, empowerment, enjoyment, and experiment through an enriched understanding of the Cathedral. There is much here for architecture to form meaningful relationships with, considering what has been done, and where to go next: the future learns and speaks from the past. A phenomenal site and a challenging studio, it seeks to make new public space in the fabric of the old.

Reordering Relationships
What is the current identity of each of the Cathedral’s urban relationships? Should these be reordered? Is (St Paul’s Cathedral + State Library grass) = (St Paul’s Cathedral + Flinders Street Station clocks) = (St Paul’s Cathedral - Federation Square TV) = (St Paul’s Cathedral + City Square) = (St Paul’s Cathedral + Homelessness) = (St Paul’s Cathedral - Federation Square TV) = (St Paul’s Cathedral + Melbourne City Council’s Swanston Street Development)?

What is an urban defacto?

Mess + Order
We have the Cathedral crypt booked for Thursday studios and planned workshops with guests in and around the site, discussing history, economics, materiality, design methods and precedents in response to your development. There will be no prescribed design and representation techniques; our rhythm will flow from productive mess to constructive order, possibility to feasibility. The final project will start day one and you will be guided through the development of your own brief in context, working closely with real constraints and inspirations.

Final Outcome
Connecting through an integrated urban vision for the precinct, the individual projects will build towards deeply-developed, medium scale architectural - or landscape architectural outcomes. This is an opportunity to contribute to a real, major project before its inception. The final format of the project will be as per an architectural competition format, with an independent jury to award and commend. This studio is the second in a series of ongoing Masters studios as part of the Richard Falkinger Heritage Grant, which will include publication and exhibition and significant funds for student prizes.

Key themes: Reordering and Relationships, Heritage and Public, Ornament and Dressing, Light and Mass, Meaning and Geometry, Future and Sustainability

14. As a means of bringing the built fabric conversation about St Paul’s Cathedral Close further forward, I coordinate two Master of Architecture and Landscape Architecture design studios for the University of Melbourne, in the Crypt under the Chapter House, partnering with the Cathedral’s Surveyor of the Fabric. We prescribe themes of Heritage and Public, Ornament and Dressing, Light and Mass, Meaning and Geometry, Future and Sustainability, Pilgrimage and Narrative, and Relationships and Reordering.
15. We give the students a personal demonstration of how to ‘carefully’ split a granite stone in two – standing well back as the Cathedral’s master Stone Mason does the job by hand as he would have for his work on the recent restoration project. We also include a demonstration of dalle-de-verre chipping by the glass artists who crafted the lantern above the crossing and the new West Door; the photogrammetor; neighbouring fashion designers; and a local archeologist. We want to make the project as real – hands-on, as possible.

16. Each week we run one studio out of the Crypt, and break for tea and biscuits or a hand-drawing task in and around the Cathedral. Our aim is to both give the students a close experience of the site, and for the activities of the students to be visible and positive interruptions in the daily life of the Cathedral. Notably, the Dean of the Cathedral gives inquiring and critical presentations about the future of the Cathedral in the city, that includes thinking about the whole precinct.
**17.** I start by thinking about how to model a process. How different people would interact at certain times would require a sequence, and, we decide to increase the amount of participation over time. Starting from the core team or key individuals, we could increase the tenor and numbers of different people getting involved to a larger working group and reference group. In this way, starting to engage with some of the stakeholders that are a bit difficult to work with, or with whom we have anxiousness around working – our target group: homeless and indigenous people, should only occur later down the track when we are ready and have a solid structure.

**18.** In the beginning of the Chapter House Lane Lunch project I am thinking about how I can increase participation and foster a participatory process. We formulate a concentric circles project engagement structure based on principles of community development practice – defining roles, expectations, patterns of communication, and a sense of inside and outside. The target would be both others and ourselves.
Proposition 3: Governance

19. To facilitate working as a team I set up a shared, cloud-based folder for key documents, images and work in progress. This also includes contact numbers of team members and general resources such as case studies, research papers, and weblinks. As team leader I write regular project summaries, reporting what we have achieved over the week, challenges and what we are aiming at over the next. To both separate and coordinate, I phone and meet regularly with team leaders in three delegated contact groups: indigenous, homeless and Cathedral.

20. I write a short pithy statement of the project for the purposes of presenting to institutional stakeholders (i.e. Cathedral and Council) – and give our team focus. The key headings are (in order) project title, purpose, description, and organisation.
3. Occupations and reflections in Cathedral Place

How was it occupied?

The experience produced two distinct lives, one external – the relationship between ourselves and stakeholders – and another internal – the relationships in our own team. Each developed in different ways, some planned others not. In reflection we could observe some of the exchanges between the two lives and their redefinition.

Externally, we made progress developing new relationships and were able to increase the engagement and ambition of activities and depth of conversations about the site/space. Yet, at the same time we met with resistance more often. We seemed to get further away from dealing with the external challenges – i.e., from one stakeholder to another, in particular excluding homeless and indigenous people in decision-making. Internally, we projected the experience onto ourselves causing ourselves to grow, learn and formalise, but also to lose informal cohesion, stop acting and distancing ourselves from the site/space.
**Process**

In the sequence of our activities, it seemed that no matter what we did, I could not get our own team (UVM members) to actively participate. The main reaction was for the core team to prepare ever detailed plans, procedures and expectations – but it was never enough and the outcomes were usually different to what was planned. In contrast, the design studio procedures ran according to plan. Notably, the connection between the students, the students and the site, and the students and the Cathedral deepened over time. In these more structured processes, guests contributed by fulfilling influential roles and their interaction drove the project in creative ways.

**Event**

The events were usually opportunities to meet and reconnect with people. Many key steps in the process and ideas in the project were exchanged in events through intimate face-to-face conversations. This was in contrast to responses through email and or discussions in formal meetings. During the exhibitions, people had discussions over the work, mused, and sometimes shared their preferences. While we were unable to achieve our plans for a pinnacle lunch event aimed at connecting the key stakeholders, we were able to generate a shared intention for it.

**Governance**

The culture of the Cathedral organisation became more apparent as we recognised the limits to the existing decision-making structures. It was socially interconnected but not action-oriented and we encountered a hierarchy that designated responsibility yet lacked authority to take action. For our UVM organisation, governance became a sticking point in which we mirrored the very inactive structures we were trying to change. Arguably our own sense of failure led to us to eventually wind up our organisation and lose friendships.
21. An ambitious idea was for the stakeholders themselves to get involved in planning. We imagined three steps of participation in running the Chapter House Lane Lunch event. First participants could serve the lunch. Second, they could have conversations and connections about relatively simple, less-passionate things: bread and sauce; and third, demonstrate working together. Our concept was that this experience would allow new connections and trust to be developed – but the challenge we had was how to get our own volunteer team involved, responsible and reliable. We organised a series of lunches at different peoples’ homes - to practice having a lunch ourselves. We got to know one another, and to enjoy and build the social aspects of our team. These practice lunches consisted of bring-your-own food and friendship, and little ‘shop’ talk.

22. Team members had difficulty taking on active roles, taking initiative to work out steps forward and completing tasks. As core members of the project team we focussed on making our planning more tangible and paid for mentoring from a team member with experience in community development. Sensing significant anxiety in
the team, we arranged a training day about community engagement with marginalised groups, situations with risk of violence, and perceived anxiety or power imbalances. This included role-play. We talked about approaching others in pairs, and respecting gender balances – it would often be better for a woman to approach a woman, or a man a man, and then, to prefer giving coffee and cigarettes over money; to avoid asking personal questions and take notice as to the level of others’ anxiousness or aggression.

23. Our team’s state of hesitation proved destructive. We were never able to run the planned lunch. Eventually focussing more and more on planning and risk management over action, tensions developed between members. This precipitated an intense process of formalising, arguments over our founding story, high emotions and a full committee spill at the ‘Annual General Meeting’. The breakdown of the project was first in a string of abandoning processes, including us dismantling our shared warehouse and eventually winding up the organisation.
24. At the end of the first semester, we arranged for a celebration and exhibition of the student’s work in the Chapter House above Chapter House Lane. This first had to be booked to fit in with the wedding functions that usually use the space, and saw the students store hand-made cardboard easels in the archbishop’s rooms to bump in and out at the right times.

25. Just before opening, we arranged for the Dean’s Secretary to formally invite a prestigious and influential jury to independently judge the work as per an architectural competition, lunch together, and award cash prizes. The jury included the Dean and the Senior Lay Canon of St Paul’s Cathedral; the Chairman of the National Gallery – major funder of the last restoration project, the creative program manager of Federation Square; two architectural design lecturers from the University of Melbourne; the (new)
Occupation 2: Event

President of UVM; the Editor of Architecture Australia, a director of two innovative urban activation organisations; and the site’s Urban Designer from the City of Melbourne. The winner was a rural student, who was interviewed in their local newspaper.

26. The two studio semesters were each exhibited for a week in the North Transept of the Cathedral, open to the Cathedral congregation, and the general public. We sent out fine black and white invitations and displayed posters, both via email and mail on thick watercolour paper with logos of the Cathedral and the University. Finally, we set aside funds for three students to graphic design a book of all the work which we presented to the Surveyor of the Fabric, the Dean and the Mayor.

27. An estimated four thousand people viewed the exhibition over the two days. We attended to listen to some of the anecdotes of visitors: “Is this a real project?”; “Are they currently planning something in the carpark?”; “Wow, yeah… it could be something more that space, I never really thought about that.”
Key events timeline

August - October 2009
Research report and mapping project completed about Cathedral Place on behalf of Schloss Group, engaging with stakeholders St Paul’s Cathedral and City of Melbourne.
Outcome: $20,000 in-kind gifted from Schloss Group to St Paul’s Cathedral

October 2009
City of Melbourne Community Service Grant Application submitted.

September 2009 - January 2010
Informal occupations of the site including committee meetings, afternoon tea, poetry and investigative writing and photography published in The Bulletin (Urban Village Melbourne’s member newsletter)

February 2010
City of Melbourne Community Service Grant Application awarded.
Budget: $5000
Requirements: Must include both homeless and indigenous people

July - October 2010
Architectural and Landscape Architectural Design Studio Close Over(p) lay design studio is presented in the close overlay design studio at Melbourne University School of Design. 15 students attend weekly classes in the Crypt under Chapter House Lane. The three collaborating tutors are Ammon Bayerle (UVM), Tim Derham (Melbourne University) and Richard Falkinger (St Paul’s Cathedral). A close relationship with the Cathedral staff and environment is forged through regular contact and occupation. Dean (Marc Burton) speaks to students. The Surveyor of the Fabric (Richard Falkinger) invites the Master Stone Mason, Glass Artist Photogrammetor and an Archeologist to speak about the site’s Indigenous history. As well as academics from Melbourne, Monash and RMIT Universities, prominent Architects and Landscape Architects contribute as guests for regular reviews (Six Degrees, Rush Wright), Architects and Landscape Architects contribute as guests for regular reviews (Six Degrees, Rush Wright), Architects and Landscape Architects contribute as guests for regular reviews (Six Degrees, Rush Wright), Architects and Landscape Architects contribute as guests for regular reviews (Six Degrees, Rush Wright).

August - September 2010
Reformation of the project team, new members, social lunches and meetings to kick start an action phase of the project. More detailed project planning undertaken as well as risk management framework, logistics set up, draft media and website.
Meeting with City of Melbourne Community Safety (Nancy Piennard)
Meeting with City of Melbourne Indigenous Unit (Jeanette Vaha’akolo)
Weekend training session of project team regarding engagement with Homeless and Indigenous people in public space, borrowing City of Melbourne Housing and Homeless research (by Nanette Mitchell)

September - November 2010
As a group Urban Village Melbourne Inc has little to no activity and the committee ceases to meet. Very little communication between members and with no cashflow, the group is forced to cinnel lease of a shared warehouse space.

November 2010
Student work from the Close Over(p) lay design studio is presented in the Chapter House Lane Lunch project at Architects For Peace, titled “Art and Social Space”.

March 2010
Team formed to work on the Chapter House Lane Lunch project, meeting at Cathedral Place and roles defined. 12 members involved and excited about the project.

March - May 2010
Core planning team undertakes mentorship training and methodology research for community development and engagement work. Regular publishing of key learnings and project plan updates in The Bulletin (Urban Village Melbourne members).
Meetings with City of Melbourne: Urban Design (David Pryor) and St Paul’s Cathedral (Richard Falkinger)
Urban Village Melbourne has an AGM and major reorganisation with leading to the fallout of some important members.

June 2010
Public presentation and panel discussion including the Chapter House Lane Lunch project at Architects For Peace, titled “Art and Social Space”.

June - July 2010
Planning of an Architectural and Landscape Architectural Design Studio at Melbourne University School of Design about Cathedral Place (www.closeoverplay-posters.com)

September - November 2010
As a group Urban Village Melbourne Inc has little to no activity and the committee ceases to meet. Very little communication between members and with no cashflow, the group is forced to cinnel lease of a shared warehouse space.

November 2010
Student work from the Close Over(p) lay design studio is presented in the Chapter House supported by The Lord Mayor’s Charitable Trust, awarding prizes to three students. A week-long exhibition of the work, to redesign Cathedral Place and Chapter House Lane is located in the North Transept of St Paul’s Cathedral. More than 2000 people visit the exhibition giving significant, inspiration, questions and support to the Cathedral.
Core planning team meets with the main body of the Cathedral to set a date for the Chapter House Lane Lunch. It is decided that we should apply for an extension to run in February – March 2011, mostly in order to better plan the event and avoid the Christmas period
City of Melbourne grants an extension to the project till March 2011.

December 2010
Participation in the weekly Argiccare brunch BBQ for homeless people in Chapter House Lane at Christmas, including Urban Village Melbourne (Ammon Bayerle), Melbourne University (Tim Derham) and St Paul’s Cathedral (Dean Marc Burton, Verger and professional staff). More than 40 homeless people attend including a few from the indigenous community.
Occupation 3: Governance

28. Looking back over the different parts of the project, I shared our story at a public talk about “Art and Social Space”. I reflected not only on what we did in the site with the Cathedral community, but also, what we did to ourselves. I offered an early learning about nurturing one’s own community; that art was an activation of social space which included one’s own space. To this I shared samples of our newsletters, and pictures of our social get togethers as part and parcel of that story.

29. Notable decision-moments included: a sudden end to our contract and the neighbour gifting funds to the Cathedral; an acquittal meeting with Council enthused by our narrative of activities, learning, successes and failures rather than project delivery; and a meeting with key Cathedral stakeholders in which participants readily volunteered their stories of the site — memories of violence, death, crime, sadness and shame — and spoke about their hopes. The stakeholders admitted their powerlessness and committed themselves to ambition and explicated their core values, asked for our leadership, and set a postponed date for the lunch. We saw first hand in an invited Cathedral committee meeting, the internal everyday conflicts that stunted any change; and in our own organisation, a major restructure process that ended in UVM’s discontinuation.

30. When the due date to acquit the community services grant approached, UVM was close to disbanded and the path to the lunch event was nowhere in sight. Anxiously we arranged a meeting with our Council contact, and set ourselves to compiling all that we had done into a timeline of images and narratives, and a spreadsheet of our moneys. As we told the story of how we didn’t achieve what we set out to do, the Council grant officers seemed visibly shocked. To our surprise, the sentiment was awe. “How did you do all that — with so little?”, “It’s fantastic to see such intense learning; what you have done is find out about the site, bring attention to the difficulties there, and, developed your own community’s knowledge and skills,” “What a great story, thank you”. The Council officer signed off the grant and directed us to keep any left over funds and pay ourselves some wages.
Author/s: 
Beyerle, Ammon

Title: 
Participation in architecture: agonism in practice

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2018

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