The role of access panels in facilitating universal design

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Themes

Issues of inclusion and design...opaque

Top-down building and design professionals...

Users rendered marginal...

Need for an agnostic politics...productive of democracy...
Divide talk into four parts

1. Disability and environment – whose knowledge?
2. The rise of consultocracy.
3. Interventions and subventions – the case of an access panel
4. Conclusions - democratising universal design
1. Disability and environment ï whose knowledge?
Nothing about Us Without Us!
A denial of basic functioning
The professional trades...
The professional gaze…
Not inclusion but access…
Impairment reductive…
Legally directed…
Design authority...User /consumer hidden/ marginalised?

Reduced to object of technique... e.g. simulation
2. The rise of consultocracy.
It is but a small portion of the public business of a country which can be well done, or safely attempted, by the central authorities. (Mill, J.S., 1862)
We are putting behind us the narrow, selfish individualism of the 1980s, but also the 1945 'big state' that wrongly believed it could solve every social problem. We are building an enabling state founded on the liberation of individual potential (2002).
empowering and enabling individuals, families and communities to take control of their lives so we create the avenues through which responsibility and opportunity can develop.

(November 10th 2009).
Reinvigorating local democracy (DETR, 2000)

Disability Discrimination Act (2005, Part 5), local authorities to pursue disability equality

Transforming Places, Changing Lives (DCLG, 2008), full engagement with communities

Local Government and Public Involvement Act (2009)

2011, Localism Act
Post ideological era

Universal rational consensus

Pluralism is possible

Conflict is irrational
3. Interventions and subventions – the case of an access panel
The research

GLA, Strategic Access Panel

London Legacy Development Corporation, Built Environment Access Panel (BEAP)

18 month research programme
Some key moments:

2008 – Olympic Delivery Authority

Built Environment Access Panel (BEAPS), 2008

BEAPS, formally part of the legacy

Post 2012, incorporated into the London Legacy DC

An Inclusive Design Strategy (2012) and a set of Inclusive Design Standards (2013)
The London Legacy Development Corporation, 2012

September 2012 Ŧ Planning permission for nearly 7,000 homes to be built on the Park is agreedé

10,000 new households by 2030é

Five new neighbourhoodsé
Features of the access panel

12 members, five women, seven men

Combination of access consultants and people with personal and professional experience of disability

Avoiding single issue domination or negativity

Rejection of universal design as no more than a standards or legal approach to attaining access
Organising the encounter

“One meeting I went to…90% of it was presentation and that’s a clever way of stopping people being able to talk”
Constructive dialogue...

‘you’ve got a team of architects that come along, giving up valuable time to try and work with the group, and what they do is they get it in the neck and their first reaction to that when they walk out the door is “never again”’. 
Beyond the regulations

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Beyond the regulations require us to do this and that as far as it goes. They don't understand why they're doing it, they don't understand the social model, and it goes no further than that.
Valuing the members

‘I go to meetings where there are people there who are being paid £1000 a day...and I’m sweating blood to try and keep up with this, sitting all evening reading papers...’
Beyond the Panel…

There isn’t the resource to maintain or to retain a network in a community, to be able to go back and say this is the proposal and this is the likely outcome.
Representative of what and whom?
4. Conclusions: democratising universal design
Uniqueness of the place, long term projects, political support, resourcing, etcé

How access knowledge is received, understood, and usedé

Access panelsé appointed and not democratic, and politics of non disclosure

Access panelsé indicative of the marginal nature of access knowledgeé