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Final Conclusions, by Tim Edler

I want to encourage and support any debate that helps to open up the conception to a degree that you (considerably) maximize the potential and (considerably) minimize restrictions and the risk to suffer from frustrated neighbors.

The situation:

The suitability of the urban situation in general is debatable regarding size and light emission of the installation and - in the end - of course also regarding the potential (artistic, provocative, painful...) content you might want to experiment with. There is no doubt, that the placement of the media screen will always been seen in regard to the media lab's (incidental) placement at this location. Keeping in mind that a lot of the criticism towards media in public space is fed by the impression that they lack ꞌurban empathy and integration it is a risky decision to feed this sentiment by placing a platform of that size in this dense mostly residential area. That is unless you confine yourself to the development of media architecture/ media art with the explicit and exclusive mandate to develop formats for that specific kind of urban situation.

But I think you don't want to do this (how ever honorable this project might be) and I also don't think you should.

I am afraid that the questionability of the approach is nourished by the design of the installation as such. Two aspects have to be mentioned. First it is the shape of the media screen, which is inappropriate or unfortunate in that situation. The stepped shape of the pediment the installation forms is almost an emblem representing the general inaptness or indifference of conventional billboard installations towards the buildings they choose to cover up. That is poor design - my personal opinion - but I am afraid that more benevolent characters will be forced to the same conclusion. For anyone in doubt whether or not to interpret this installation as an eye twinkling built comment on the brutal practice of billboard "architecture" or as another form of sophistication there is that other aspect which proves that the design is not diligent, precise and site-specific.

I am talking about the small symmetric reflector added to each of the LED light bulbs and which painfully the architects highlighted as one of the important design features of the installation. They are "simply" wrong. It is guaranteed that it will not do the job with that set-up on this site. The symmetric reflectors will

amplify the horizontally output of light - towards the blind wall of the H&dM bank building adding nothing if not actually subtracting the amount light arriving on the small square.

To wrap this up: I think you are in danger to bet on the wrong horse.

I think that you must change the way you look at the installation and the way you communicate the installation to both artists, activists and neighbors if you want to avoid to face painful (for you) and destructive (for the case) controversies and misunderstandings. The perspective is very important, even if the actual operation might not be so terribly different. Do not ever present the installation as a permanent media screen!

Here are some recommendations:

1. Not an installation, but a modular toolkit

Change the concept. Act and communicate that there is media installation toolkit which could be anything and anywhere (->2).

And look!: The symmetric rigid frames are quite suitable to form variable installations. Equip the frames with some standard scaffold building (quick assembly) mounts. Think about storage and transportability. Care for the scalability modularity of the control system behind... (I´m convinced UVA can provide some excellent tools here.)

2. Not fixed, but anywhere on, around and beyond the location

Elements On that wall, on that square, attached to buildings, but also: independent from buildings for instance on a scaffold creating shape rather than only surface, on a truck, in groups sent out to other locations, attached to other buildings etc. etc..

This will give you the opportunity to team up with other initiatives and projects, to be much more present in Madrid and to even earn some money by lending it out at times.

3. Not permanent but content specific temporary and always changing

Once you adopt the idea of a media installation toolkit it is natural that each content could (should) demand a specific hardware and spatial configuration.

Even if that does only change the physical layout occasionally it will add an important level of opportunity and aspiration to the project. The demand to think about content and format will keep artist mind awake and it will keep them challenged. Some safeguard against mediocrity and laziness.

And it is the best possible strategy to avoid potential conflicts in the neighborhood.

Beyond that my personal likes would recommend a ˙ Not only Art as a 4th point as I think that today we need to include of all possible phenotypes of architectural and urban applications of digital media surfaces. That means to be open to experiment with advertisement and other forms of evil propaganda or to allow (and yes encourage) unspeakable ˙ public viewing events staged by residents initiatives.