Been there – done that! The amazing things that transparency advocates can learn from architects

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2015: Transparency is widely recognised as a cornerstone of good, accountable government and the practice of transparency today is alive and strong: we are deploying the cutting-edge of technology, we have a formidable infrastructure for policy advocacy, we are operating with ever more fine-grained strategies of engaging people and our tools for learning and measuring impact are also gradually getting better.

So where next for transparency and open governance?

How about looking a bit outside the box and travelling back to the roots of transparency as a physical, material quality of an object? Sounds odd and hopelessly outdated, but at least for me this turned out to evolve into an amazing and eye-opening exploratory journey written up in a new working paper.

The four-point speed read:

1. there is a lot that we can learn from architects and how they have been approaching and thinking about transparency
2. there is a surprisingly strong and contemporary physical dimension to institutional transparency that is somehow largely overlooked by the transparency community
3. re-visiting and revitalising the conversation about physical transparency could provide a wealth of inspiration for the road ahead for the institutional transparency crowd and a push for such a conversation is coming from some very unexpected corners
4. As inspiration I present three first ideas of where such experimentation around physical transparency could take us to. How, for example about feed(feed-back)back?

So journeying back to the roots of transparency could actually be a very promising pathway into the future.


You can see Dr Zinnbauer’s early working papers at the Department website.

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