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Spine art by R. West

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Fig. 270.

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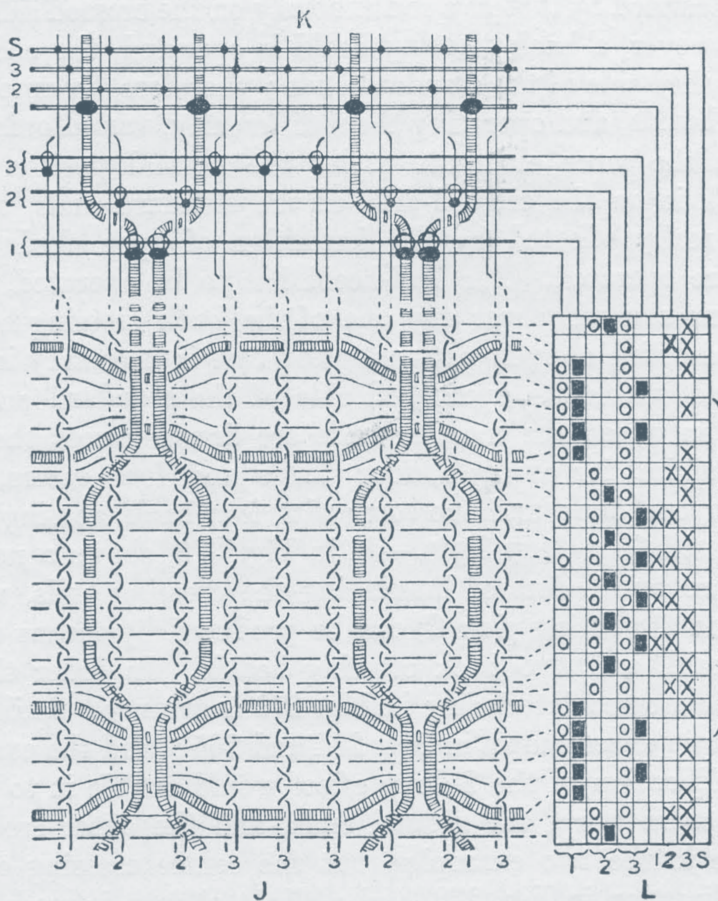

Fig. 271.

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Editorial

BRIAN WARD

Comment Vivre Ensemble, one of the essays included in this edition of *building material*, draws attention to a metaphor that is often used by architects when they speak about the built environment – that of the woven fabric. The potency of this metaphor lies in its suggestion that the daily practices of a populace leave traces that mesh together over time to create an artefact both useful and rich, with the textures and patterns of the resultant fabric telling the story of the community who wove it together. Indeed, the metaphor intimates that the collaborative weaving of the fabric has a part to play in both creating and sustaining the community. Although the obvious seductiveness of these notions would suggest that such a metaphor should be used with caution, some practices do indeed leave traces and viewed in a particular way the accumulation of these traces do resemble a textile – the urban fabric.

The concept of the *urban fabric* which denotes primarily the fixed, built environment is complemented by the related idea of the *close-knit community*, a much less tangible artefact. This phrase suggests that the repetitive intersection of individuals' patterns of movements through space and time, although leaving no physical traces, can begin to create that elusive entity - a community. It indicates that the built environment, which channels these patterns, should be central to any attempt at generating community.

The following articles study the complex relationship between the built landscape and the communities who create and inhabit it, drawing attention to the fact that it is difficult to think of the connections between people without considering the way space is organised. While warning that a badly planned environment can allow daily practices to occur without the construction of a community, the essays also contribute to the search for new environments which might facilitate community building.

Starlings by Aoife Desmond

1

The Wonderful Battell of Starelings Fought at the City of Corke, in Ireland, the 12th and 14th of October Last Past, 1621.

CIARA KEOHANE

'ABOUT THE SEVENTH OF OCTOBER LAST, Anno 1621, there gathered together by degrees an unusual multitude of birds called stares, in some Countries knowne by the name of starlings. These birds are for the quantity of their bodies strong, for their quality bold and ventrous, among themselves very loving, as may appear by their flights keeping together all timnes of the yeare, excepting breeding time. That 'Birds of a feather hold and keep together' hath ever been a common custome in these as much as any other kind; but now the old proverb is changed and their custome altered cleane contrary. For at this time, as these birds are in taste bitter, so they met to fight together the most bitterest and sharpest battell among themselves, the like for the manner of their fight and for the time the battell did continue, never heard or seene at any time or in any country of the world. The stares, or starlings, they mustered together at Cork some foure or five daies before they fought their battells, everyday more and more increasing their armies with greater supplies; some came as from the east, others as the from the west, and so accordingly they placed themselves, eastward and westward about the citie, during which time their noise and tunes were strange on both sides, to the great admiration of the citizens and the inhabitants near adjoining, who had never seen for multitude, or ever heard for loud tunes which they uttered, the like before. Whereupon, they more curiously observing the courses and passages they used, noted that from those on the East and from those on the west sundry flights, some twenty or thirty in a company, would passe from the one side to the other, as it should seeme imployed in embassages; for they would fly and hover in the ayre over the adverse part with strange tunes and noise, and so return back againe to that side from which, as it seemed, they were sent. And further, it was observed that during the time they assembled the stares of the East sought their meate eastward, as the stares of the West did the like westward, no one flying in the circuits of the other. These courses and customs continued with them until the XII of October, which day being Saturday, about nine of the clocke in the morning, being a very faire and sunshine day, upon a strange sound and noise made, as well on the one side as on the other, they forthwith in one instant took wing, and so mounting up into the skyes encountered one another with such a terrible shocke, the sound amazed the whole city and all the beholders. Upon this sodaine and fierce encounter there fell down into the citie and into the rivers multitudes of starelings, or stares, some with wings broken, some with legs and necks broken, some with eies pickt out, some their bills thrust into the brests and side of their adversaries, in so strange a manner that it were incredible except it were confirmed by letters of credit and of eye-witnesses with that assurance which is without all exception. Upon the first encounter they withdrew themselves back east and west, and with the eagerness and fury encountered several times, upon all which these stares fell down in like strange and admirable manner as upon the first encounter. They continued this admirable and most violent battell till a little before night, at which time they seemed to vanish, so that all Sunday, the xiii of October, none appeared about the citie. Upon this Sunday divers passengers came out of Suffolk, who, sailing between Gravesend and Wolwigge, they heard a loud and strange noyse and sound in the aire, whereupon, casting their eyes upward, they saw infinite multitudes of stares fighting in all violent manner together, with a crow or raven flying betwixt them, for the fight being so high they could not perfectly discerne whether it was crow or raven. These birds had also several encounters, making great sound and noise, and even as they divided and retired themselves, the crow or raven was seen in the middest. But what slaughter was made they could not see, as the evening was somewhat dark and the battell was fought over woods remote off, but for more assured proof of this fight the Sunday before-named, there are at this time in London divers persons of worth and very honest reputation whom the printer of this pamphlet can produce to justifie what they saw, as cause shall require, upon their oaths. Now to return to the last battell fought at Cork by these stares. Upon Monday the xiiii of October, they made their return again, and at the same time, the day being as faire a sunshine day as it was the Saturday before; they mounted into the aire and encountered each other with like violent assault as formerly they had done, and fell into the city upon the houses and into the river, wounded and slaughtered in like manner, as before reported; but at this last battell there was a kite, a raven, and a crow, all three found dead in the streets, rent torn, and mangled.'

Dr. Caulfield, The Council Book of Cork, British Museum Tracts, London, 1621 quoted in Cork Historical and Archaeological Society Journal, Series 1, Vol. 3, 1893. Found by Ciara Keohane, an architect who can swim 35m under water in one breath.

2

Peace Terrain: Building Multinational Tolerance In The City

SCOTT A. BOLLENS

CITIES ACROSS THE WORLD are prone to intense inter-communal conflict and violence reflecting ethnic or nationalist fractures. Cities such as Jerusalem, Belfast, Johannesburg, the Spanish Basque cities, Nicosia, Montreal, Algiers, Mumbai (Bombay), Mostar, Beirut, Brussels, Sarajevo, and now Baghdad are urban arenas prone to inter-group tension and violence associated with ethnic or political differences. In these places, ethnic identity and nationalism combine to create pressures for group rights, autonomy or even territorial separation. The political control of multinational cities is contested as nationalists push to create a political system that expresses and protects their distinctive group characteristics. I believe that extreme circumstances of these polarized nationalistic cities reveal ordinary truths about the capacity and limitations of urbanism to affect meaningful and positive change; that these unsettled urban contexts illuminate the basic relationships between urban policy and political power far better than in more mature, settled contexts when these relationships become obfuscated and of greater complexity. The seemingly extreme nature of these cities only makes more visible those urban characteristics that all cities share. Polarized, contested cities provide us with mirrors into the fear, separation, exclusivity and denial that course through the cityscapes of all urban areas.

Polarized cities challenge us to confront whether we are hopeful or pessimistic about our ability to get along together. A puzzle faced by policymakers in multicultural cities - whether Beirut or Detroit, Sarajevo or New York is a basic one that forces us to confront our own beliefs and predilections. In an urban situation where there are antagonistic, or potentially antagonistic, ethnic or racial groups, do we as city-builders create opportunities for these groups to mix and interact, or do we facilitate the healthy functioning of ethnically pure neighborhoods and districts? Decisions such as these in multicultural cities will send emotive symbols to future generations about what we either aspire to in hope or accept in resignation.

In this article, I report on a study of how urbanism and local governance address group differences in cities of nationalistic conflict. I investigated four settings - Basque Country and Barcelona (Spain) and Sarajevo and Mostar (Bosnia-Herzegovina) - that have experienced inter-group conflict, war and major societal transformations. I interviewed 109 urban professionals (governmental and nongovernmental), community officials, academics, and political leaders in these cities. The compelling similarity between the cities I explore here is that each has been forced to address group-based claims during periods of political uncertainty - in Bosnia, since the end of war in 1995; in Spain, during that country's transition between 1975 and 1980 from Franco authoritarianism to a democratic, and regionally decentralized state. Further, in the Spanish Basque case, urbanism has contended with threatened and actual political violence that has traumatized that region since democracy.

Cities can be critical agents in the development of a multiethnic tolerance. They are crucibles of difference, constituting a necessary and stringent test of whether, and how, group identity conflicts can be effectively managed. The city is a test of whether different nationalistic groups can co-exist amidst the proximity, interdependency, and shared geography of the urban sphere. Debates over proposed projects and discussion of physical place provide opportunities to anchor and negotiate dissonant meanings in societies hosting antagonistic ethnic groups; indeed, there are few opportunities outside debates of urban life where these antagonistic impulses take such concrete forms in need of pragmatic negotiation. Urban interventions can engage productively and proactively in the creation of inter-group co-existence and societal peace building and can constitute a bottom-up approach able to complement top-down peace-making negotiations.

In the formulation of multinational democracies, urban interventions have the potential to reinforce and actualize new governing ideologies of democracy, multinational tolerance, and openness. In Barcelona, for example, large-scale planning frameworks, smaller site-specific architectural interventions involving public space, and metropolitan development projects have been instrumental in moving urban society from the 'grey' and static Franco city to, initially, the fragile and emerging democratic city, to, eventually, the stabilized and robust multinational city of today. The ability of planning to articulate and implement the post-Franco democratic city had a pedagogical quality to it, informing the city's residents about the physical and social-psychological characteristics of an open society. The close alignment of the interests of the new democratic administration and the citizenry facilitated a mutual social learning process about the relationship between political change and urban betterment. In Bilbao, urban development partnerships between local, regional, and central state levels constituted mechanisms of cooperation that have led to significant improvements in urban quality of life and have opened up opportunities for political advances amidst extremist violence. Physical revitalization and urban restructuring in the region is promoting a new and transformed sense of city identity that is competing with negative industrial and political images. Despite missed opportunities and

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slow progress in Sarajevo and Mostar, urban policies by the international community that seek returns of minority households are key in efforts to reconstitute and actualize multinationalism. Further, in Mostar, the international community endeavored to delineate a central zone spatial buffer that would engender cross ethnic and ethnically neutral activities. In both Bosnian cases, the city is held as a necessary fundamental anchor toward holding the state together socially and politically.

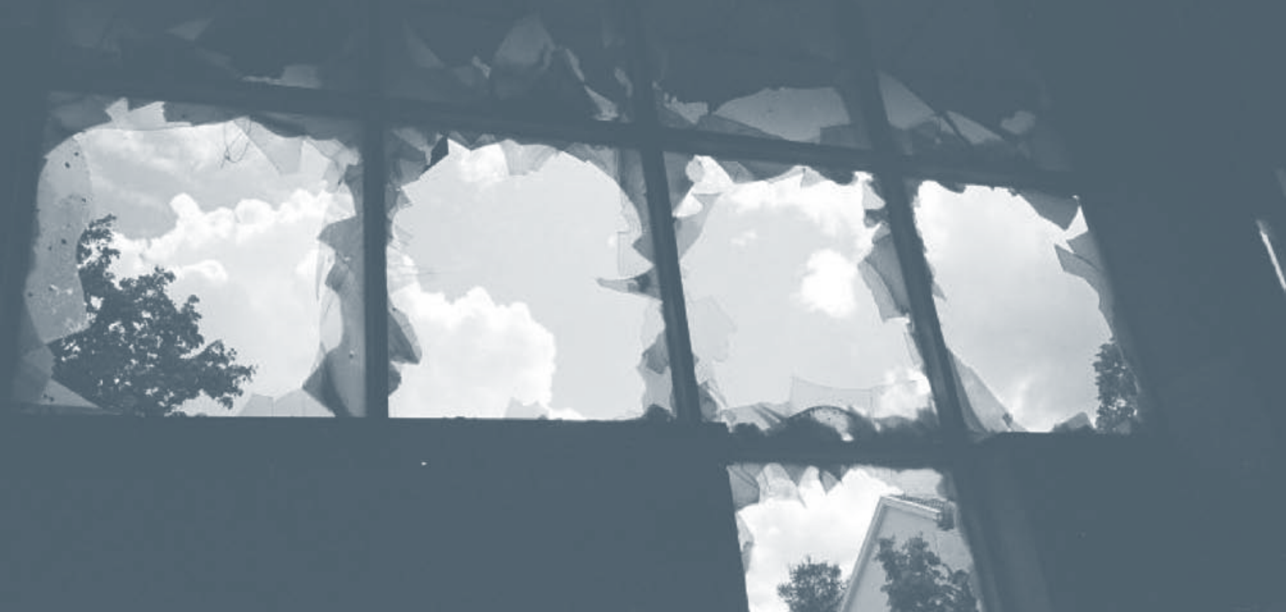
Yet, the promise of the city lies not only in the potential of urbanism to implement and actualize new governing ideologies, but also in its potential to catalyze the reconstitution of multinational societies. Because cities have certain spatial and political dynamics that differentiate them from the state level, they provide opportunities for concrete and innovative interventions that affect peoples' lives more immediately and meaningfully than state actions. Barcelona was ahead of the Spanish state and the Catalonia region in its ability to actualize multinational democracy in its built and institutional landscapes. Actions by Basque Country cities have catalyzed a dynamic urban track and a reconsideration of political nationalism amidst an otherwise lagging and sclerotic regional politics. The roles of Sarajevo and Mostar in not only anchoring the Bosnia state but as constituting multinational models able to stimulate further state-level inter-group integration reveal the catalytic potential of the city organism in an unstable national setting.

Cities are necessary and strategic foundations on which to build a sustainable and integrated society. By the nature of what it is and what activities it enables, a city is an integrative influence for individuals and activities within its borders. After the trauma of a war, this integrative effect will be minimal or nonexistent as antagonistic groups stay far away from each other in terms of residential and work life. However, if properly configured so that its jurisdictional space includes multiple groups, a city will over time constitute a container within which economic and social interactions start to take place across ethnic divides. The nature of city life is that it brings people together. Drawing on a common tax resource pool, a single city government that represents multiple ethnic groups in a fair way may at first divide up the city resources and allocate them to their respective groups based on patronage and favoritism. However, over time and as younger and more accommodating political leaders take over from war-traumatized ones, negotiations about how best to spend public tax money may aspire to collective citywide goals instead of ethnic-specific objectives.

Cities do not always lead as a rule to these outcomes of social and economic integration. Indeed, and especially pertinent to the analysis of Mostar, cities must be constituted and geographically configured in certain ways at the start of their corporate life for there to be opportunities for these positive inter-group effects to occur. Yet, recourse to a collective cross-ethnic interest in a multicultural setting is only possible if municipal political geographies reach across and encompass all ethnic group interests within a single urban government system set up to fairly represent each of these group interests. Such a local governance framework sets the necessary condition for war hatreds and antagonisms to be moderated at the local level, likely over considerable periods of time.

In societies of potent ethnic territoriality, cities can be the only places where the necessities of economic need and interdependence bring peoples together in a dynamic and mixed way. In contrast, neighborhoods, cantonal regions, and even states can become demarcated ethnically and susceptible to the protective strategies of ethnic politics. In Barcelona and the cities of Pais Vasco, nationalists and non-nationalists are more mixed at the city scale than they are in small towns or rural places. Languages and cultures mix in an urban setting and open up a space of dialogue. The political empowerment of these cities and their regions in the new Spanish Constitution provided opportunities for public planning to pursue a collective interest submerged under Franco and to illuminate and operationalize the new democracy. The collective, public interest in Barcelona has been robust, vital, and catalytic of inclusive nationalism. In the Basque cities, the collective spirit of city governance has provided an alternative and competitive non-violent path for that society.

In contrast, the cities of Sarajevo and Mostar (Bosnia) were not empowered but were submerged and marginalized and even exploited (in the case of Mostar). The collective spheres of these cities have both been damaged. In Sarajevo's case, its collective identity is fragile and susceptible because it is constrained by new post-war ethnic geographies. In Mostar, its collective identity as a city has been destroyed along with much of its physical capital. The dangers of not protecting and supporting the urban sphere as a place of transformation and multiculturalism are revealed in Bosnia. Amidst this vacuum, Bosnian nationality groups who benefit from an ethnically delineated state, cantonal, and city boundaries have entrenched themselves in segregated spatial and institutional compartments and become formidable agents actively resisting societal change.



Without an active urban governance system in Bosnia, international community efforts to build a democratic Bosnia lack the local foundational level of democracy from which to build. Instead, Bosnia's political geography reinforces and advances fragmenting impulses in the new country. The retarded peace building capacity of the Bosnian city cases in the early post-war (1995-2000) years, in comparison to the performance of Spanish city cases early in their post-transition years (1975-1980), is attributable in part to the debilitating effects of active warfare in one transition and not the other, and to the absence of a national Bosnian unity going into the post-war years. Where no such national unity exists, societal adaptation after war has proceeded in ways that are ethnically purified (Sarajevo) or are stagnant (Mostar). In these circumstances, the role of urbanism as stabilizers along a path of post-conflict normalisation is put to its greatest test. The years ahead in these two Bosnian cities will indicate whether urbanism is capable of moving an urban system out of conditions of ethnic gridlock (Mostar) and ethnic partiality (Sarajevo). The effectiveness of urbanism in Basque Country amidst different, but also challenging, conditions suggests that we should not underestimate urban policy and governance as key agents amidst division. While the choice and capacities of urban interventions is constrained by the lack of societal progress, there is still space even amidst broader political and societal gridlock and a fragile peace for urbanists to contribute important pragmatic urban models and principles of mutual co-existence.

Planning actions and principles amidst group conflict and political uncertainty will not turn around a society that is splintered or unraveled; they cannot create peace where it does not exist in people's hearts and souls. What urbanism can do, however, and it is significant, is to create physical and psychological spaces that can co-contribute to, and actualize, larger peacemaking and inter-group reconciliation. Economic development, humanitarian, and institution-building strategies operating at the ground level can be, and should be, full partners with diplomatic peacemaking and larger-order considerations of societal reconstitution.

It is in a city where urban practitioners and leaders must do the hard work of creating the practical elements of a multinational democracy, one that avoids the extremes of an engineered and subordinating assimilation, on the one hand, and an unbounded and fracture-prone multinationalism, on the other. It is in a city where our greatest challenges and opportunities lie. Dewey stated long ago, 'a democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living' where one's decisions and actions must be made with regard to their effect on others.[i] Such a balancing act between the interests of oneself and one's group with those of other people and other groups takes place most fundamentally in decision-making forums and lived experiences grounded in the city. Through our shaping of the city, we construct the contours of multinational democracy.

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i. Dewey, John. 1916. *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. New York: MacMillan.

3

In Search of the Clachán

LINDSAY JOHNSTON

CLACHÁNS ARE AN important typology in the Irish architectural heritage, but have been almost completely ignored[i] and do not gain a mention in any of the key texts[ii]. They represent a writing of the physical circumstances of the rural Irish prior to classical colonisation, and their apparently 'chaotic' layouts may offer insights into the relationship between their inhabitants and the natural environment. They have had only marginal influence on modern Irish housing, which has been more derived from foreign classical or sub-urban precedents[iii].

Interest in these clusters derives from their symbolic significance, as they represent a physical record of the indigenous rural domestic architecture of Ireland. They particularly demonstrate a settlement morphology free from the influences of geometrically ordered Graeco/Roman culture brought to Ireland, along with the classicisation of architectural thinking, by the British during colonisation in the eighteenth century[iv]. This 'disordered' morphology is significant and may be useful in informing an architecture of today in Ireland as it is free from 'extrinsic' philosophical concepts of 'order' derived from Pythagoras, Vitruvius or Palladio such as orthogonality, axis, grids, proportion and symmetry and demonstrates an 'intrinsic' organic indigenous response to culture, place, climate, topography and, perhaps, superstition. Although they were widespread in their thousands throughout pre-famine Ireland in the 1830's and even up to the early twentieth century, they have almost been eradicated by the activities of ambitious landlords in the nineteenth century, the Congested Districts Board in the early twentieth century and by recent new developments and programmes of 'housing improvement'. What is of concern is that they have been almost lost entirely without being recorded, and those few which remain seem to be disappearing like 'melting snow'.

Welsh geographer Estyn Evan's work extended from the 1930's and the first comprehensive account of his studies was in *Irish Folk Ways* published in 1957[v]. In this he includes reference to *clacháns* and to the associated rundale (called in Scotland *runrig*) system, where grazing and turbary (turf cutting) rights were shared on a commonage basis by the residents of a cottage cluster. He also refers to the terms *baile* or bally and *buaile* or booley. The former meaning home-place or townland which was used to describe the cottage cluster or *clachán*.

In *Irish Folk Ways*, Evans described and illustrated one specific *clachán* at Rathlackan in Co. Mayo as it was in 1918 prior to the reorganization of the area by the Congested Districts Board. At that time Rathlacken was inhabited by fifty-six families who had 1500 scattered fragments of land. By 1942, the population had been reduced to thirty-two families with more rational configuration of consolidated holdings. He describes the characteristics of a *clachán* thus:

To judge from surviving examples of clachans and openfields, it was customary for each in the cluster to have a small enclosure or 'gort' (garden) adjacent to it, their high walls lining a maze of narrow lanes winding haphazard among the houses. These settlements were characterized by an extreme disorder, as though the houses, in the words of one writer, had fallen 'in a shower from the sky'.

Evans recognised, however, that the disorder was not meaningless:

The absence of any discernible plan as compared with many English or German villages has led visiting critics to regard the clachan as a reflection of the disordered Irish mentality. The word that best fits the untidy

house cluster is one often heard in Ireland - 'throughother' - which is properly applied and probably owes its origin to the scattered plots of the openfield. Despite this apparently casual disorder the selection of a house site was a matter for the most careful deliberation. Shelter from the prevailing winds was a prime need, so that houses seem to snuggle together, generally located in a hollow or on a lee slope. To this end a man might throw his hat into the air on a day of wild winds and mark its falling place. But it seems it was at all costs necessary to avoid giving offence to the fairies by building across one of their 'pads'. ... The ill-luck which dogged the person who had inadvertently built his house across a fairy pad is one of the many themes which crop up in stories one hears throughout the country.

The extensive work of Desmond McCourt, elaborated the body of knowledge on *clachán* and the varying characteristics of the rundale or open-field system of agriculture. In the *festschrift* publication to Estyn Evans, Man and his Habitat, published in 1971, McCourt's paper *The Dynamic Quality of the Irish Rural Settlement* is a comprehensive ethno-geographic and historical account of *clachán* nucleated settlements[vi].

Ballintleva, Baille an tSléibhe

Ballyvody

Salahoona

Sheeaun, An Sidhean

3

Park, Páirc Láir

Knockaunakit East

Forramoyle Beg

Creduff, An Chré Dubh

In this, McCourt further explores the use of the word *bail*e, which has roots as far back as the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and correlates this, with the English affix 'ton', to the incidence of townland names with cottages clusters. He refers to the use of the Irish patronymic, or family name, in the naming of cottage clusters and associated townlands, usually with the prefix *baile.* Most important, however, is his work on the identification of the geographic distribution of *clacháns* derived from the first Ordnance Survey mapping of Ireland over the period 1832-41 and from the revisions of c. 1900. From this, and from earlier descriptive texts, he defines a broad historical picture of the evolution of the *clachán* settlements.

Nucleated settlements may have existed in Ireland from the Middle Ages. While dispersed settlement based on agricultural activities was the widespread predominant pattern of rural Ireland, nucleated cottage clusters, generally based on kinship groupings, appear to have existed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was, however, the widespread dispossession of land from the native Irish by the colonists during the eighteenth century, which saw in 1780 only 5 per cent of Irish land remaining in the ownership of the native landowners, that resulted in the concentration of the native Irish in dense settlements in the agriculturally poorer areas of the coast and mountains of the North West, West and South of the country, generally west of the River Shannon. McCourt produced two significant maps of Ireland showing the distribution of *clachán* and areas of dispersed settlement in 1832-40 and the distribution of *clachans* related to land over 600 ft above sea level in c.1900. These demonstrate a dramatic disappearance of *clacháns* in the intervening years, probably due

to the mass depopulation arising from the famine, and to the endeavours of the landlords to clear and re-organise the land into more orderly agricultural entities.

In the book *The Personality of Ireland*, published in 1981, Estyn Evans refers to McCourt's work[vii]. 'The *clacháns*, consisting in general of 10-20 houses, though occasionally much larger, were located most typically in peripheral regions, especially in the west and north. ... Such a peripheral distribution suggests that the *clachán* was a residual settlement type'. (As referred to below, this assertion was challenged by J.H. Andrews). Evans, however, places an historical social context to these observations.

It would be difficult to find a more rigid example of a caste system than that of nineteenth century Ireland with its landlords and peasants, reflected in the landscape in the big house with its high-walled wooded demesne and the naked countryside with its teeming tenantry. He writes of the *clachán*: *it was a formless cluster of small farm houses which may be compared to the Scottish 'farm town'. Lacking such village attributes as church and public-house, it comprised the homes of a constantly changing number of related families (or, in large clachans, of groups of related families) and it too was thoroughly 'throughother', expanding or decaying with no conceived plan.*

Evans again refers to superstition which may have influenced the layout or morphology of the *clacháns* in various parts of the country, in this case relating to the concept of an 'unlucky' side to a house onto which it was bad luck to extend.

Kevin Whelan, writing in a *festschrift* to the geographer J. H. Andrews of Trinity College, Dublin, recounts Andrew's reservations about some of the propositions and assumptions of Evans and McCourt[viii]. He quotes Andrews as stating 'the evidence adduced by geographers, in print, for the existence of either *clacháns* or rundale in the earlier periods of Irish history appears to be rather limited'. Andrews carried out extensive cartographic research in early pre-plantation maps of the period 1560-1620 for evidence of early nucleated settlements. He analysed 180 clusters and found that 48% were true *clacháns*, 18% were clusters attached to a large house, 17% were clusters attached to a castle and 11% were clusters attached to a church. Significantly, the common feature relating to the identified true *clacháns* was that none of them still existed.

Andrews thus questioned the assertion that the existence of individual *clacháns* was possibly continual from early history. He challenged the view that *clachán* distribution in the nineteenth century was residual and rather gave weight to the view that there was a great growth in *clacháns* between the 1770s and 1840s due to the crowding of the dispossessed native Irish into marginal and hill land. The poorest land was subject to the greatest crowding, and the smallest farms were subject to subdivision.

It may, therefore, be dangerous to try to draw general overall conclusions about nucleated settlements, their inhabitants, lifestyles and associated agricultural patterns in different parts of the island and in this regard Kevin Whelan quotes a cautionary note from a lecture by J.H. Andrews to those of us on the quest for information and understanding of the disappearing *clacháns* [ix].

Many people in this country have felt themselves as exiles from an Irish Garden of Eden and regarded historical research as a way of getting back into it. They have seen our modern culture, including our cultural landscape, as a mixture of alien with indigenous elements and they have longed to get behind that heterogeneous facade into a world that was pure, uncontaminated and freshly minted. They long to find back there at the far end of the historical rainbow, a crock of twenty-four carat genuine Irish gold. But since this prize could never be recovered intact from any single historical source, it has to be reconstructed - as an archaeologist uses broken fragments to reconstruct a beaker or a food vessel - except that in this case every single fragment, nineteenth century, seventeenth century, medieval, or whatever (just as long as it was not obviously English, Scottish, or Welsh, or Norman, or Viking) had to be assembled with all the other fragments, from all the other periods to make one huge Irish geographical pot. The idea of a single Irish settlement type with its clacháns and its rundale laid out as if it were for all eternity in some platonic heaven is a pervasive one.

My intention in planning a field trip to study *clacháns* was to identify one geographic area which offered the possibility of numerous extant *clacháns* that could be examined with a view to comparison of their size and physical disposition with regard to orientation, topography, aspect, vegetation, prevailing weather, etc.. It was hoped that some pattern might emerge that could commence a basis for an understanding of the physical characteristics of these settlements[x]. As it transpired, the mission was akin to aspiring to study comparisons of an almost extinct species - the problem was not in carrying out comparisons, but finding even one

specimen sufficiently intact to allow any examination.

In choosing a geographic area for initial studies, I was influenced by references by Estyn Evans to areas around Galway, and was particularly encouraged by writings of A.R. Orme, published in 1970[xi], referring to 48 extant farm clusters in the area of Co. Galway along the north shores of Galway Bay between Barna and Spiddal.

The original Ordnance Survey of 1839-41 contains a record of the rich morphology of *clacháns* that existed in this area. First edition OS maps have been digitised and from this figure ground plans have been produced of twelve of the clusters in an area of 10 miles from Barna to Spiddal. Field study has enabled a 3 dimensional model to be created of one - Ballintleva - where enough buildings remained to allow a 'virtual' reconstruction. In the Ordnance Survey office in the Phoenix Park, I examined on microfiche the 6 inch to 1 mile maps of the Barna/ Spiddal area dating from 1941[xii]. From these it could be ascertained that there was evidence of numerous cottage clusters, particularly on the inland (north) side of the coast road.

Orme had referred to an area '10 miles west of Barna' and the maps showed approximately 30 small side roads running north from the main

Ballintaggart, Baile-n-tSagairt

Un-named

Caher, An Chathair

Bohoona, Bothúna

i. Craig, M., 1982, *The Architecture of Ireland from the earliest times to 1880*, London, Batsford. **ii.** For example see McCullough, N and Mulvin, V., 1987, *A Lost Tradition - the Nature of Architecture in Ireland*, Dublin, Gandon Editions. **iii.** I was first made aware of the term 'clachán' by Denis Anderson when he was designing Castlepark Village, Kinsale in 1971 **iv.** This phenomenon is well documented in Shaffrey, M and Pfeiffer, W. 1990. *Irish Cottages*. London. Weidenfeld and Nicholson. **v.** Evans, Estyn. 1957. *Irish Folk Ways*. London, Boston, Henley. Routledge & Kegan Paul. **vi.** McCourt, Desmond. 1971. "The Dynamic Quality of Irish Rural Settlement" in *Man and his Habitat*. Buchanan, R.H., Jones, E., McCourt, D. (Eds.). London. Routledge and Kegan Paul. **vii.** Evans, Estyn. 1981. *The Personality of Ireland*. Belfast. The Blackstaff Press. **viii.** Whelan, Kevin. 1992. "Beyond a Paper Landscape - J.H. Andrews and Irish Historical Geography" in Aalen, F.H.A and Whelan, K (Eds.). *Dublin City and County: From Prehistory to Present*. Dublin. Geography Publications. **ix.** Andrews, J.H. 1977. An unpublished lecture entitled "The Openfield System and Associated Settlements in Pre-enclosure Ireland" quoted in Whelan, K. 1992. **x.** Dr. Philip Robinson at the Ulster Folk Museum expressed the opinion that such a purely physical examination would be limited in the conclusions that could be drawn, without related study of the social history of each 'clachán' with reference to the dynamics of its evolution and the ownership and kinship patterns of its inhabitants in Robinson, Philip. 1991. "The use of the term 'Clachan' in Ulster" in *Ulster Folklife*. Cultra. Ulster Folk and Transport Museum. Vol.7. **xi**. Orme, A.R. 1970. *The World Landscapes : 4. Ireland*. London. Longmans. 188-9. Orme also

coast road in this area. I set out to explore every one of these roads with the aid of a copy of Ordnance Survey Map Galway Sheet 105, 1 inch to 1 mile, 1899[xiii]. The area has been subject to intense development and redevelopment as part of a sporadic sprawl along the coast road west from Galway. The planning justification of permitting the construction of a new house on or near the site of an original dwelling, and the policy of giving grants for the construction of new 'bungalows' (rather than for restoration of old cottages) has resulted in widespread demolition of the old dwellings. Due to the intensity of the habitation and population in this area during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, mostly in nucleated cottage clusters, there has thus resulted an intensity of new dispersed 'bungalow' development which has thoroughly destroyed the original pattern of the landscape and obliterated, to a large extent, the original habitation morphology.

From the Ordnance Survey office in Dublin I obtained hard copies true to scale of the relevant series of larger scale Ordnance Survey maps dated 1899 at a scale 25 inches to 1 mile[xiv]. From this material it has been possible to scan the layouts into a computer and produce 'figure ground' plans of the layout of 12 settlements[xv]. The best extant settlement was Ballintleva which I photographed extensively. I then accessed a set of the first edition of the Ordnance Survey maps on Galway Sheets 92 and 93 held in Galway County Library. It was possible to observe the morphology of Ballintleva *(Bail an tSléibhe)* on the first edition maps and relate this visually to the revised edition of 1899. This showed that the physical disposition of the settlement did change substantially in the intervening years and that several of the more substantial cottage units in the cluster visible today were constructed after the first survey and before the revision. This was unexpected as the social history of these *clacháns* suggests that they were in decline after the famine and one would have expected the layout in 1839 and 1899 to have remained unchanged or 'subtractive', rather than 'additive'. There do not appear to be any additive changes to the settlement between 1899 and today.

It was hoped that this study would be able to start to draw some conclusions about the configuration of *clachán* settlements in the area west of Galway. As it transpired the study has simply emphasised the threat to a record of these settlements and the need to draw attention to their disappearance.

This is an edited version of a paper presented to the Tenth Irish Australian Conference at La Trobe University, Melbourne in 1998, based on field and cartographic research undertaken in Ireland in 1993.

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referred to extensive 'clacháns' at Menlough on the shores of Lough Corrib, north of Galway city, also mentioned by Evans as having had 2000 inhabitants in 1845, immediately prior to the famine. I was also made aware of *'clachán'* clusters in Dunkellin, east of Galway, by Dr. Patrick Donohue who showed me several in that area, that were more dispersed in nature to those in the Barna and Spiddal area. **xii**. Ordnance Survey of Ireland. Dublin. Survey of 1941. Galway Sheets 92 and 93. Scale 6 inches to 1 mile. **xiii.** Ordnance Survey of Ireland. Dublin. Survey of 1839-40. Revised 1899. Galway Sheet 105. Scale 1 inch to 1 mile. From these detailed maps it has been possible to elaborate the field observations and to identify that the following settlements were significant nucleated clusters of 'clachán' character. Ballydonnellan, Ballintaggart, Ballintleva, Seershin, Sheeaun, Ballyvody, Salahoona, Creduff, Ballynahowna, Ballynahoogna, Park, Knockaunakit East, Forramoyle Beg, Creduff, Caher and Bohoona. It is worth noting the high incidence of useage of the *'Baile'* prefix and the associated Irish patronymic in those settlements that transpired to be substantial in this area of study, confirming previous conjectures by others in this regard. **xiv.** Ordnance Survey of Ireland. Dublin. Survey 1899. Galway Sheets 92-VI, VII, VIII, X, XI, and XII and 93-IX, X and XI. Scale 25 inches to 1 mile. Revised 1920 and 1943-46. / **xv.** The twelve settlements are as follows : Ballintleva, Ballyvoddy, Salahoona, Sheeaun, Knockaunakit East, Park, Creduff, Forramoyle Beg, Ballintaggart, Bohoona and Caher and one with no name.

4

Among these Stones is Very Sweet Pasture

MARY LAHEEN

THE NEXT TIME you pop down to your local multi-national-franchised convenience store to pick up some beef from Argentina, some apples from China and some butter from - well from wherever the global market can find it cheapest at the moment – you might consider that Ireland, until recently and for a period of about 4,000 years, was primarily an agricultural country which produced its own food. Consequently, the cultural landscape of Ireland is largely the imprint of earlier communities using the landscape for the production of food. We continue, of course, to create and add to the cultural landscape. As human beings we cannot avoid leaving our imprints on the landscape of the earth. However, as Ireland becomes increasingly urbanised the legacy of our generation will mostly be of an urban and suburban nature. The impact of our tenure on the rural landscape is likely to be, in addition to a reduction in bio-diversity and an increase in polluted environments, those six-lane highways that traverse the island with their attendant bridges, ramps and land forms. The imprint of human interaction with this landscape has built up for more than 2,000 years forming accretions which produced by the twentieth century a country rich in diverse cultural landscapes, due in part to the fact that the country has been inhabited and farmed for so long. The geographer Fred Aalen considers the cultural landscape:

our major and most productive creation; it is both an artefact based on foundations of geology and climate, and a narrative, layer upon layer of our history and nature's history intertwined.[i]

The peripheral location of Ireland in relation to the European landmass had in previous centuries delayed the effects of development and change as they occurred on the Continent. This allowed for the survival of many aspects of the cultural landscape. In communities where people live in close connection with the natural world their history is powerfully connected to their agriculture. That history in Ireland, particularly around the coasts, reaches back into the early Neolithic period. The constancy and continuity of settlement and agriculture mean the landscape is replete with field monuments, forming a remarkable landscape legacy[ii]. The predominance of agriculture, and the concentration on pastoral farming – the rearing of cattle and other livestock – in Ireland has helped to protect heritage in the landscape; removal of land forms in other places has often occurred to facilitate tillage farming. I recently had reason to research one of the most distinctive remaining cultural landscapes in Ireland - the dry-stone wall field-boundary system of the Aran Islands in County Galway: a cultural landscape and communal monument of unusual intensity, unique because of its particular location, history and geology.

The Cultural Landscape of Aran

Why study such a landscape? To render it legible to oneself? To explore a communal monument created by a population, who were essentially poor, in the course of their daily work over many centuries? To attempt to understand the landscape in 'deep time': that is, to perceive all the layers of the cultural landscape simultaneously? Surprisingly, despite intense investigation of the Aran Islands over the last two centuries – everything from the prehistoric monuments to the blood type of the inhabitants – and although the significance of the other layers of cultural landscape have been recognised, the agricultural landscape had not been explored. Coming from disciplines of the built environment such as architecture or urbanism it can be difficult to view a rural landscape with equanimity. It becomes necessary to adjust our perspective so accustomed have we become to valuing a society in terms of its urban fabric. It is accepted without dispute that the veneration of the medieval European city, for example, is justly deserved. It is not only a beautiful artefact, but also an historical record of a way of life, an expression of the spiritual and cultural beliefs of its people and an artistic and architectural manifestation of its society.

Curiously, in the case of the cultural landscape of Aran, a comparison with the city is suggested in part by the intensity and rectangularity of the built fabric there, exposed so clearly in the 19th-century Ordnance Survey (OS) maps, which show all the field divisions of even the smallest fields. The map is so densely subdivided that it looks very much like what we expect from the map of a city. Making one's way through the labyrinthine fields and lanes, map in hand, is similar to discovering an unknown city. And, for anyone who has traced burgage plots on a city map, the experience of tracing the field-boundary walls of Aran echoes with familiarity.

When one arrives on one of the islands, the 'city', from the ground at eye level, cannot at first be seen – it looks like a natural landscape, because of the uniquely integrated relationship between construction and landscape. Here, the stone wall sits on a natural limestone rock and the boundary between the two is almost indecipherable. There, the field of grass and wild flowers was laboriously prepared by men, combining

sand and seaweed from the shore, perhaps as recently as 60 years ago. Yet it looks like 'landscape' If you arrive by air, however, the mark of the human hand is startlingly visible, and with great clarity you can see the dry-stone wall field-boundary system tracing its pattern over the landscape. This cultural landscape was constructed over many centuries for the purpose of sustaining agriculture, and therefore people, in harsh climatic conditions in an area where soil was scarce. The field-boundary system is influenced by geology, by the ancient land division system of the Gaelic world, and by the political and social history of more recent centuries.

Geology

Because of the lack of soil cover, the geology of the islands is more apparent than in many other places. The two primary geological formations that are most evident on the islands are the nearly horizontal beds of limestone and shale and the vertical fractures through the rock, called joints, which formed as a result of ancient earth movements. The layers of limestone and shale are piled up on top of one another at the southern Atlantic coast forming high cliffs from which the limestone beds step down towards the northern coast[iii]. The escarpments appear as gigantic steps across the island, laying out the shale terraces before them.

Because the shale is impermeable it traps the groundwater at the base of each limestone terrace until it emerges distilled, at the ledges of the southwestern sea cliffs, or at the base of the inland cliffs, in pools of fresh water[iv]. Not surprisingly, this is where the villages of Aran occur – sheltered by the inland cliffs close to the freshwater pools and the fertile shale beds. These two geological formations – the shale terraces and inland cliffs, and the sets of vertical parallel fissures running roughly north-south through the limestone beds – which combine to create the particular hydrology of Aran, have directly influenced both the farming and settlement pattern, and the field and land-unit-division boundaries of the islands. It is the remains of the glacial drift carried over from Connemara and the Galway coast by the receding ice at the end of the last Ice Age, that has provided the raw material for this settlement. From the Neolithic wedge tombs and Celtic cashels, to the Early-Christian churches and intensely constructed field boundary dry stone walls of the nineteenth-century; all have been built of this glacial debris.

Land Division

While the walls follow in many respects the demands of the geology they also adhere to a land division system which was common to the entire country and divided the whole island of Ireland into sustainable land units. The *baile* (township) as the unit of land measurement is of ancient origin. It is known to have been in place by the 12th century. The historian Kenneth Nicholls speculates that many of the units may have been laid down as early as the 7th century, and some even before. By the late Medieval period, the whole country was composed of a net of these units, each of which had a name and a boundary, and was often the holding of a sept or lineage.

The *baile* remained the same despite changes in settlement pattern or land use.[v] It was a rural settlement unit with all the necessary varieties of land for a self-contained economy. It included a small amount of fertile land and a larger amount of less fertile land. If there was mountain, woodland or bog in the vicinity each baile claimed that part that was nearest to it. Some time after the establishment of this network of units they were assessed and divided into fractions of the unit. The size of the fraction corresponded to their economic value in terms of livestock that could be fed or crops that could be produced, rather than a strict acreage. Accordingly, there are sometimes large differences between the size of the assessment units.[vi]

Some indications show that in Connaught, the assessment system based on the division of the baile into four *ceathrúna* (quarters) was created by the 12th-century O'Connor king Toirrdelbach or his son Ruardrí. Sometimes the township is subdivided into *trian* (thirds), anglicised as trine or treen. The quarter or trine was divided again into cartrons (a word of Norman origin) and gneeves. There is a strong provincial unity in Connaught, including Co. Clare where one *baile* equals four quarters, 16 cartrons, or 24 gneeves. There are some differences in the names of the assessment units and the sizes of them among the provinces. For example, in Ulster the *baile* is known as a *bailebetagh* and is considerably larger than the large unit in Connaught, but it is clear that an overall system was applied to the whole country.

This type of system is not unique to Ireland. There are parallels in the land division of pre-Norman England where land was divided into vills, trefs, townships etc. What is remarkable is that the matrix still exists in Ireland, although not in its complete and original form. During the first Ordnance Survey of 1839, many

of the fractional assessment units were then recorded as townlands, as is evidenced by the numerous townlands now existing in the west and northwest which have the prefix "Carrow" from the Gaelic ceathrú. Some new units were made but generally this was done by amalgamating existing townlands, or by subdivision, which did not damage the overall framework. Studies in Ulster show that it is possible to reconstruct the original bailebetagh from the modern townlands[vii]. It is interesting to consider the matrix in the context of the non-urban nature of Gaelic society. The townland matrix is in fact the spatial dimension of that society[viii].

Investigating the land-division system on Aran proved quite interesting. For some reason the modern townland in Aran is equivalent to, and is likely to be, the ancient *baile.* The fractional units - *ceathrúna* - exist but were not mapped as townlands during the Ordnance Survey as in the rest of the country, but remained as fractional land division units within the original *baile.* They were mapped, fortunately, by the writer and cartographer, Tim Robinson, in the 1970s who walked the boundaries with local people and recorded the locations and names of the *ceathrúna* on his map of the islands.

The land-division units of the townlands and the *ceathrúna* are bounded by dry-stone walls which often follow the fissures of the limestone pavement, particularly on Inis Mór where the divisions run mainly north-south, though there are some interesting exceptions. The field-boundary walls parallel the joint pattern and in this way render the fissures manifest in a densely patterned bocage landscape. On Inis Mór the typical boundary wall of the *ceathrú* starts high at the Atlantic cliffs and traverses the island in a northward direction following the line of the joints along the limestone pavement, sometimes turning to follow an inland cliff, stepping down across the north-facing terraces as they reach the shallower northern coast.

It is clear from the present *ceathrúna* that they each represent a viable economic land unit. They have a long and narrow form to take in different types of land and to give each *ceathrú* access to the shore. Each *ceathrú* contains: land on *Na Craga* (the crags), the high limestone plateau towards the Atlantic cliffs where cattle are wintered; land on the sheltered side of the lower fertile shale terraces and limestone pavements, which are endowed with wells and springs; land at the north coast where the terrace steps down to sea level and sometimes contains part of a sandy beach. The sand was an important ingredient when 'making land' on the limestone pavements, which occurred throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Seaweed was the other crucial ingredient for the reclamation of land. Most *ceathrúna* contained or had a share in a natural harbour where seaweed could be harvested. The *ceathrú* also contains or gives access to a fresh-water lake, or to another source of fresh water such as the *tuar loch* (turlough), a mysterious disappearing lake which emerges and disappears with fluctuations in the water table[ix].

On Inis Meáin, the townland boundary clearly divides the island in two, not always following the line of the geological sets of joints. It cuts through the centre of the ravine in the middle of the island, giving an equal share of terrace and shale to both townlands. It cuts across the cregs on the high ground and the lower bare limestone pavement of the northern part of the island on an equal basis, and veers to the northeast at the northern coast to divide equally the precious sandy terrain, which has supported fertile fields at least since the early 19th century and probably before. The ceathrúna boundaries are complicated and result in dispersed parcels in an apparent effort to give each ceathrú the necessary types of land for a sustainable unit.

On Inis Oírr, the interaction between the land-division system and geology or terrain is also very clear. It is graphically illustrated in figure 2 where one can see the central boundary between Ceathrú Droim Arlamain and Ceathrú an Chaisleáin dividing an Creig Mhór at the highest point of the island. It then cuts down northwards through the ravine below Dún Formna, known as An Ghleann, to divide the shale terraces and, veering to the northeast at the sandy beach, equally divides the resources of sand and seaweed at the northern coast. The island is thus divided into four, ensuring that each *ceathrú* has a fair share of shale terrace, crag, sandy beach and access to the sea.

Settlement

Settlement has ocurred, not dispersed but in villages, in direct relationship to the *ceathrúna.* In some instances, *ceathrúna* boundaries may have been created in relationship to an already existing settlement. In all, there are 14 villages on Inis Mór, eight on Inis Meáin and five on Inis Oírr. Each village farms the land of one or sometimes two *ceathrúna*. When the village farms two *ceathrúna*, its location often straddles the boundary. The pattern of land-holding, is one of unconsolidated holdings where each household of the village has land dispersed across the *ceathrú*. In order to farm the *ceathrú*, each farmer required some of the different types of land that the unit offered. This self-sustaining unit contributed to the survival of the people through the famine eras, in comparison to the tragic consequences of the 19th-century clachan and rundale settlements of the Connemara coast. There, communities were farming areas of waste land

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

of mountain or bog which had never been self-contained sustainable units

This pattern of settlement and agriculture based on the land-unit matrix retained aspects of the system of farming in common that belonged to the Gaelic era, and continues to express vestigial forms of medieval farming. Overlaid by the landlord and tenant system in the 18th and 19th centuries, adjustment was required to meet the new order. The densely subdivided fields enclosed by dry-stone walls which characterise the cultural landscape today, reached their climax of division and subdivision at the end of the 19th century.

If we take the date of the second-edition Ordnance Survey in 1899 and look back to first-edition OS 1839, the most striking thing about the comparison between the two maps is the intensity of wall-building during the period, the amount of land reclaimed, particularly on the north-facing terraces, and the fact that, as well as reclamation, the fertile land is almost everywhere subdivided into four or six smaller fields. Clearly, the new fields of the terraces were planted with potatoes to provide a quick food supply and also because the sowing of root crops or potatoes was part of the land-making process and helped the soil to get a foothold[x]. The fertile fields were subdivided, one supposes to more intensely farm the existing pasture. It may be that in a time of rising population and high rents that these areas were being used for crops, mainly potatoes.

Historical accounts of earlier periods in Aran show a more diversified agriculture. Roderic O'Flaherty's description of farming in the Aran islands in his Chorographical Account of *Iar* or *West Connaught* of 1684 is as follows:

Among these stones is very sweet pasture, so that beef, veal and mutton are better and earlier in season here than elsewhere, and of late there is plentiful of cheese and tillage mucking and corn is the same with the seaside tract. In some places the plough goes.

A description of J.T. O'Flaherty, who visited the islands in 1824 gives an account of the agriculture. He describes crops such as potatoes, rye and black oats being grown, as well as small quantities of barley, wheat and flax. He describes the pastures stocked with sheep, goats, small cows and horses and:

The mutton is considered to be delicious; but their most profitable stock consists of calves, which are reputed to be the best in Ireland.[xii]

He writes that the agriculture is supplemented by fishing and kelp-burning. There are 120 boats between the three islands which take in 'immense quantities of cod, ling, haddock, turbot, gurnet, mackerel, bream, &c, and in the season, abundance of lobsters, crabs, scollops, cockles, mussels, &c.' He describes the season of fishing for herring and sunfish, and 'within forty miles of the coast is the great cod-bank, which is supposed to reach Newfoundland.' Sadly, Aran fishermen cannot do this today – the seas are no longer brimming with such rich aquatic life. The gardens, he says, 'are well supplied with every necessary vegetable, and the isles abound with a variety of medicinal and sweet herbs.' [xiii]

J.T. O'Flaherty's account is roughly contemporaneous with the first Ordnance Survey, and both map and documentary evidence seem to describe a modest but sufficient way of life and an agriculture that was varied and potentially viable. Less than ten years before the Great Famine, the islands appear to have communities living in farm villages surrounded by enclosed fields, which they farmed individually. The crags may have still been farmed in common for wintering cattle, and unreclaimed rocky pastures on the terraces may also have been held in common.

We are fortunate that Aran, being so far removed from the centres of power during the landlord era, was not 'improved' during the 19th century. Even the Congested District Board concentrated its efforts on the fishing industry, and left the farms unconsolidated. Even today, one can trace the relationship between a house in the village and groups of fields dispersed throughout the *ceathrú*, allowing each family access to the various types of land within the self-contained ecomonic unit.

Although farming continues on Aran and the agricultural landscape, of walls, fields, water troughs, stiles, access roads etc, constructed as part of everyday life for the requirements of a working farm, remains largely intact for the time being, tourism has taken over as the main industry of the islanders. For as long as our oil-rich global economy continues, this ordinary man-made landscape in its setting of extraordinary natural beauty, will be visited and marvelled at by tourists rather than be exploited for the production of food.

A shift in thinking about conservation of energy may require a return to the traditional practice of producing and eating food that is close at hand. Perhaps, sooner than you think you might pop down to your local convenience store and pick up some of that sweet mutton or goat's cheese from the Isles of Aran.

Fig. 3

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i. Aalen, F.H.A. 'The Making of the Irish Landscape', *Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape*, edited by F.H.A. Aalen, Kevin Whelan, Matthew Stout (Cork University Press, Cork, Ireland, 1997) p5 **ii.** Aalen. op. cit., p4 **iii.** Feehan, J. *Farming in Ireland: History, Heritage and Environment,* (UCD, Dublin, 2003) p19 **iv.** Daly, E.P. 'A Hydrogeological Investigation on Inishmaan, Aran Islands' (GSI Dublin, Internal Report, 1977) **v.** Interestingly the land division system was not altered, even during the plantations. At an earlier date, in the east of the country, Anglo-Norman manors were laid down on the ancient territorial framework. See Simms, A. 'Core and Periphery' *Common Ground: Essays on the Historical Geography of Ireland*., eds. Smyth, Whelan (Cork University Press, 1988) pp34-38 **vi.** Graham, J.M. 'Rural Society in Connaught 1600-1640', *Irish Geographical Studies*, ed. N. Stephens and R.E. Glasscock (Queen's University Belfast, 1970), p. 19, and also McErlean, T., 'The Irish Townland System of Landscape Organisation' *Landscape Archaeology in Ireland* ed. T.Reeves-Smyth, F. Hammond (B.A.R. Oxford, 1983). The early work of the geographer Jean Graham in regard to the land-division system in Connaught has been very informative and has influenced much of what follows on the subject, and also Thomas McErlean on the townland matrix. **vii** McErlean, T. op cit. p31 **viii.** Ibid. p335 **ix.** Dunford, B. *Farming and the Burren* (Teagasc, Dublin, 2002) p10 **x.** Source: Dara Beag Ó Fátharta, Inis Meáin, September 2004, in conversation. **xi.** O'Flaherty, J.T. *A Sketch of the History and Antiquities of the Southern isles of Aran, lying off the West coast of Ireland; with Observations on the Religion of the Celtic nations, Pagan Monuments of the Early Irish, Druidic Rites, &c,* (Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, 1824) p56 **xii.**O'Flaherty, J.T., op.cit. p58 **xiii.**Ibid. p57

5

Greenore, Co. Louth

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CO-OPERATIVE

6

Is 'Suburban Community' an Oxymoron?

RUTH MCMANUS

The new settlements are without any of the essential social amenities. There are no parks, no playing fields, no town halls. The only possible result must be a great increase in street gangs and juvenile crime.[i]

These all-too familiar complaints about the lack of facilities in newly-built suburbs around Dublin highlight one of the frequently-aired sentiments about such new areas; namely, that their poor physical provisions ultimately have a negative impact on society. What might be surprising, however, is that the above quotation suggesting that suburbanisation, accompanied by poor social provision, may result in a loss of community was penned some sixty years ago, referring to the now well-established areas of Crumlin and Drimnagh. So, the suggestion that suburbanisation is detrimental to 'community' has a rather more lengthy pedigree than might be expected, but does that mean that the belief is true or false?

Across the Western world, suburbs and suburbanisation have frequently been used as scapegoats for societal ills.[ii] In doing so, there has been a tendency to lump together the physical space of the suburbs and their social characteristics, without necessarily acknowledging that the relationship between these two aspects is complex. The suburb is, in fact, the location and the built form, whereas 'suburbia' has a cultural significance, referring to the way(s) of life of the people living in suburbs ('suburbanites'), generally portrayed as an identifiable group or class in society. Typically, suburbia is seen as involving an essentially private way of life which focuses on domesticity and family pursuits. It is a lifestyle generally associated with home ownership and, increasingly, with mass consumption. However, even a cursory exploration of the history of the suburbs suggests that the common perceptions and stereotypes of suburbs and suburbia are misleading.[iii] Furthermore, a rather idealised image of what constitutes community has probably contributed to criticism of suburban developments.

As long as there have been cities, so too have there been *suburbs*, the places sub urbe, below or outside the walls. In Mediaeval times, suburbs were where the poor lived, sometimes also serving as the location of noxious trades which were excluded from the city itself. It is only relatively recently that suburbs became seen as purely residential, as a retreat from the city with a higher status than the central area. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Friedrich Engels described such suburban areas which had become enclaves of the wealthy. His famous study[iv] of Manchester highlighted the phenomenon of residential segregation and suburbanisation, describing how the bourgeoisie lived apart from the cities from which they derived their wealth 'in free, wholesome country air, in fine, comfortable homes, passed once every half or quarter hour by omnibuses going into the city'. Engels was highly critical of this 'hypocritical plan' which enabled the wealthy suburban-dwellers to avoid the unpleasantness of the industrial city, forgetting 'the misery and grime which form the complement of their wealth.' With the nineteenth-century suburb, then, there came a sense of betrayal, that the new suburbanites were rejecting the city both physically and morally. Geographical separation was associated with social segregation.

The suburban paradox[v], as described by American writer Lewis Mumford, that suburbanisation involves 'a collective effort to live a private life', was reflected in the built environment. Not only were the suburbs physically removed from the city, but their micro-geography also enabled the quest for privacy, with the home providing a refuge defined by semi-detached or detached houses, gardens, gates, hedges, blinds and lace curtains. There was an emphasis on the family unit and on domestic ideals of protection and privacy. Nonetheless, through this increasing physical isolation, the suburbanites paradoxically defined themselves and attained a collective identity. Certainly the new suburban populations of the nineteenth century differed greatly in their composition from the society which existed in the cities, but does that mean that they were not communities?

Irish towns, although for the most part less industrialized than their British counterparts, also developed suburbs in the nineteenth century. In Dublin, such suburbs were outside the city boundaries and therefore came to be governed independently. This gave even greater scope for the new areas to develop their own place identity and with it a sense of community. As the city became increasingly Catholic and Nationalist, the suburban 'townships' gained a distinctive character, being seen as both Protestant and Unionist. As Mary Daly describes it, the suburbs provided an environment where the 'Protestant and Unionist Dublin middle-class could evade the unpleasant reality that they were a minority which was increasingly losing political control in both Ireland and in the city of Dublin'.[vi] The 1871 census showed that 18% of Dublin city's population

was Protestant, compared to 37% of the population in the independent suburban townships. Thus the population of these early suburbs of Dublin could be said to have shared a common identity. As a group under siege, the geographical retreat to the suburbs enabled this particular community to retain and even reinforce their identity, with physical separation contributing to social unity.[vii] In the twentieth century, the story of community in the suburbs took a new turn, as local authorities began to build suburbs for the working classes.[viii] They addressed the physical nature of the suburb and the issue of whether ideal layouts, designs and densities could engender a sense of community. Importantly too, there was a major shift in tenure as the ideal of home ownership for all classes became enshrined in public policy. From the 1920s onwards, long-standing concerns around urban slums crystallised into a new policy of mass working-class suburbanisation to new schemes where houses could ultimately be owned through tenant purchase arrangements. Ideologically, the policy makers favoured the single family house, which was thought to promote stable family life, and home ownership, which was believed to create responsible citizens and a stable society. However, with the project to re-house the slum-dwellers in single-family suburban houses underway, there came a realisation that these physical improvements came at a social cost. There was a sense of dislocation as close-knit family and friendship networks were disrupted. Loss of community in the move from slums has been a common theme of many authors, not just in Ireland. Some families rejected the new suburban local authority houses to return to their former city centre homes, while the authorities recognized the 'difficulties encountered by families suddenly removed from surroundings which, however defective in many essential respects, had some compensatory advantages…'[ix].Perhaps it was the adversity and hardship of those times, the horrific living conditions and hand-to-mouth economic status, that contributed to the creation of a sense of community within the slums. Strong bonds were created because they were necessary for survival.

The new local authority working-class suburbs differed from their speculatively-developed middle-class counterparts in that the former represented a top-down solution to perceived urban problems while the residents of the latter may be seen as a self-selecting group, having chosen to move to suburban areas. Whether this actually led to great differences in the level of community spirit in either type of suburb is, however, a moot point. The new suburbs probably had more features in common than features differentiating them. Whether speculatively built for private consumption or erected by the public purse, suburban housing has generally come to be seen as mass-produced and conformist in design. Stereotypicially, at least, suburban populations are also uniform. Some fifty years ago, in his critique of Levittown in the USA, Lewis Mumford argued that 'It is a one-class community on a great scale, too congested for effective variety and too spread out for social relationships'. Developer William J. Levitt's counter-argument retains a familiar ring today, 'What would you call the places our homeowners left to move out here? We give them something better and something they can pay for'[x]. The issue of one class estates has persisted to the present day.

The uniformity of class within particular suburban developments is generally paralleled by uniform demographic profile. This could be seen in an extreme form in the Irish local authority suburbs built in the last century. For example, because large families were favoured under

Dublin Corporation's priorities for housing allocation in the 1930s, there was an over-representation of young couples and children under the age of sixteen at the start of the life of new suburban estates. Additionally, the limited facilities available in these new suburbs was seen as a cause for concern, as the quote at the start of this article reveals. As social problems became evident in many of the new housing schemes, both the physical and demographic nature of the suburbs was addressed in attempts to find solutions. It was suggested that the layout of every new housing area should 'supply opportunities of developing a community as well as a civic spirit and in time allow of a traditional culture being built up'.[xi] In order to achieve this goal of developing a traditional community, the need for a range of family sizes and ages was recognised. In turn, to cater for a mixed population, this report from the 1930s emphasized the necessity of providing a range of accommodation, rather than the rows of standard, mainly four-roomed, houses which were being erected in the new suburbs.

Today, newly built suburban homes at the edge of the built-up area are usually occupied by young couples at the family formation stage of the life-cycle, much as was the case in the 1930s schemes described above. This is recognized by the builders and estate agents who frequently refer to 'starter homes'. The very problems of uniformity of class and stage of the lifecycle may, however, be important factors in enabling the creation of a sense of community, in terms of common interests, among new suburbanites. It makes sense that Clarence Perry placed the primary school at the heart of his 'neighbourhood unit', with so many young families simultaneously taking up residence in new areas. The establishment of new social ties and new communities in Irish suburbs was frequently based around the spatial unit of the parish, with its church, schools and sports clubs. The problems generated by the lack of facilities in new areas may also, somewhat ironically, have helped to save them by contributing to the ultimate development of a sense of community, another example of unity in the face of adversity. The outer ring of suburbs at any time can be seen, as Dingle explains, as 'the suburban frontier… the city's main breeding zone and the main residential building site.'[xii] The analogy of suburbs as a new frontier can, indeed, be carried further, with new residents seeing themselves as pioneers.

In a fascinating paper based on interviews with older suburbanites in Melbourne, Barbara and Graeme Davison have demonstrated how individuals who moved to new suburbs without roads and essential services interpret their experience within a pioneering master narrative which generates an imagined community.[xiii] The shared experience of individuals moving to the new suburbs created a common cause. In their quest for crucial services, for the completion of promised schools or retail facilities, the new populations of the suburbs gradually band together. Their similar goals enable a form of collective identity to become established.

It is possible that the new suburbs are different, as increasing commuting distances may restrict the growth of a community spirit among the time-starved, stressed population. Certainly there are some contrasts with previous suburban generations, as commuters choose to leave their children in schools on their route to the workplace, rather than in their home areas. Similarly, with reduced attendance at religious services, the role of church congregations in providing a community anchor has been reduced. In a contemporary study[xiv] addressing the rapid expansion of Ratoath, Co. Meath, however, sociologists have discovered that a strong sense of community exists. Residents are particularly keen to be involved in tackling what they perceive as key issues impacting on the quality of life of their community such as the unregulated nature of development, a lack of basic amenities, access to school facilities and high traffic volumes on inadequate road infrastructure.

Lack of community values in new suburbs is frequently seen as a contemporary issue. However, as the examples from the past have demonstrated, this concern is not new, but has been a persistent issue since suburbanisation began. The difference now is that Ireland is experiencing a far greater rate and scale of change as suburbanisation processes have begun to appear relentless. As we have seen, Irish suburbs have been around for a long time and most have achieved a sense of community identity over the course of their existence. So, do we need to be concerned about the social impacts of this current wave of suburbanisation? The question could also be posed as to whether a greater sense of community is afforded by city centre apartment living, or by gentrification processes which are often seen to have led to the demise of older, more established communities? Suburbs simply provide

an easy target for social critics. In any case, the recent study by Peillon et al suggest that even in the newer and more distant commuter suburbs, a sense of community can be established.

One common feature of the diverse forms of suburb described above is that community ties generally develop over time. Early pioneers, particularly spurred by a common cause, gradually develop a sense of identity. This may be encouraged by the availability of certain basic facilities which provide a focus for social interaction (e.g. schools, churches, shops). Secondly, and often related to this, new suburb-dwellers will gradually come to have an impact on the built fabric. This may be through their campaigns to have certain facilities provided or, alternatively, through various forms of nimbyism. It also occurs as individuals attempt to stamp their mark on their own homes and surroundings, modifying and personalising their mass-produced homes. These processes seem to have little to do with the professionals and everything to do with the way that people operate at a fundamental level. A recent study of two Dutch suburbs[xv] concludes that city councils and suburban critics should allow new neighbourhoods develop on their own, rather than attempting to make new areas more urban or enforcing civic pride. While the professionals and policy-makers should certainly work to provide the highest possible quality of housing, services and other facilities in suburbs, ultimately it is the people themselves who will create new suburban communities.

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With thanks to G & T Crampton Ltd. for permission to use their images.**i.** Dillon, 1945, p. 19 **ii.** This has been particularly true since suburbanisation became a mass phenomenon in post-war North America, with critics suggesting that such uniform residential developments were aggravating problems of social cohesion. See Lupi & Musterd. **iii.** See Harris, R. and Larkham, P.J. (eds.) *Changing Suburbs: foundation, form and function,* Spon, London, 1999 for a fuller exploration of this theme. **iv.** Engels, F., 'The Great Towns', in R.T. LeGates and F. Stout (eds), *The City Reader,* Routledge, London, 1996. **v.** Mumford, L. *The City in History,* Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1961. **vi.** Daly, M.E., *Dublin: the Deposed Capital, a social and economic history 1860-1914,* Cork University Press, Cork, 1984, p. 123 **vii.** See O Maitiú, S., *Dublin's Suburban Towns, 1834-1930,* Four Courts, Dublin, 2003 **viii.** See McManus, R. *Dublin 1910-1940, Shaping the City and Suburbs*, Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2002. McManus, R. 'Blue Collars, "Red Forts" and Green Fields: Working-Class Housing in Ireland in the Twentieth Century', *International Labor and Working-Class History* 64, Fall 2003, pp. 38-54.McManus, R., 'Urban Dreams, Urban Nightmares', in Hourihane, J. (ed) *Engaging Spaces, People, Place and Space from an Irish perspective*, Lilliput Press, Dublin, 2003, pp. 30-44. **ix.** Housing Inquiry, *Report of inquiry into the housing of the working classes of the city of Dublin, 1939-43*, Stationery Office, Dublin, 1943, p. 138, para. 387 **x.** State Museum of Pennsylvania online exhibition, Levittown PA, Building the Suburban Dream, HYPERLINK "http://server1.fandm.edu/levittown/default.html" http://server1.fandm.edu/levittown/default.html, accessed 1 June 2006. See also Kelly, B.M., *Expanding the American Dream: Building and Rebuilding Levittown,* State University of New York Press, New York, 1993. **xi.** Citizens' Housing Council, *Report on slum clearance in Dublin 1938*, Citizens' Housing Council, Dublin, 1938, p. 30 **xii.** Tony Dingle, 'People and Places in Post-War Melbourne', in Graeme Davison, Tony Dingle and Seamus O'Hanlon, eds., *The Cream Brick Frontier*, *Histories of Australian Suburbia* (Monash, 1995), 30. His paper identifies two key phases of the suburban life cycle. The first is a pioneer phase where 'families set up home as the suburb was physically assembled around them' (p. 35), and during which time he hypothesizes a scarcity of resources and relative material privation. Dingle's second key phase occurs when the children leave home, often to become a new generation of suburban pioneers in outer suburbs. **xiii.** Barbara Davison and Graeme Davison, 'Suburban Pioneers', in Graeme Davison, Tony Dingle and Seamus O'Hanlon, eds., *The Cream Brick Frontier, Histories of Australian Suburbia* (Monash, 1995), 42. **xiv.** Peillon, M., Corcoran, M. and Gray, J., *Civic Engagement and the Governance of Irish Suburbs,* Policy Institute, Trinity College Dublin, 2006. **xv.** Lupi, Tineke and Musterd, Sako, 'The Suburban 'Community Question'', *Urban Studies,* Vol. 43, No. 4, pp. 801-817, April 2006.

7

The Gaelic Athletic Association in Dublin: Grounds and Social Centres

WILLIAM NOLAN

IT IS MY BELIEF based on research and participant observation over the years that 'community' is an elusive concept in the urban context. It may be more relevant in the context of the Gaelic Athletic Association in Dublin to use the term social capital defined in a recent OECD report *(The well-being of nations, 2001)* as 'networks, together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups'.

1886-1970

The Dublin County Board was founded on 12 December 1886. Although beset with many difficulties there was a gradual increase in club numbers in Dublin from an initial size in 1886 to 32 by the end of 1887 and an impressive 120 by the end of 1888. But a proper historical perspective must apply to the term 'club' which in this early stage applied to a collection of 21 players, a number of officials and perhaps a patron such as the local publican.

From the beginning the GAA was not in a position either in financial or organisational terms to provide playing grounds and one gets the impression that the association was not unduly worried about this. Dublin county finals at this time were played on pitches loaned by private benefactors such as Lord Ffrench, at whose demesne at Elm Park the first championships in 1887 were played, or the Byrne family of butchers on whose land at Beech Hill, Clonskeagh, the championships of 1888 took place.

Although the GAA had venues there is little or no evidence of any club acquiring permanent centres for meetings and socialising apart from an intriguing reference to what may have been the earliest purpose-built GAA club facility in the Celtic Times, 10 September 1887. It reported that St Patrick's Club, Kilmainham had erected 'a beautiful stand, capable of holding about a thousand spectators, and executed at considerable expense by the club'. The playing area extending to 10 acres was enclosed by a high woodwork partition and it had a couple of dressing and refreshment tents. This achievement is particularly laudable as the club only held its first AGM in January 1887. Unfortunately by 1893 the club had disbanded. One of the primary reasons for St Patrick's demise was the almost fatal split in GAA ranks over the Catholic Church's condemnation of Charles Stewart Parnell, one of the Association's three patrons, in June 1891. Club numbers fell nationally from 1,000 in 1888 to 220 in 1891 and only 23 clubs attended the Dublin Convention in that year.

Commemorations of the 1798 rebellion in 1898 helped revive the GAA. Its saviours in the early twentieth century were sensible administrators such as James Nowlan and Luke O'Toole at national level, and the committed young men who merged the communities of the language, the games and the national cause. Yet by this time no Dublin GAA club owned a ground and few had the resources to rent. Typical of the new clubs who espoused a stern cultural nationalism was St Laurence O'Toole GAC founded in October 1901. The North Strand club trained at St John's ground, Donnycarney, now Parnell Park, the property of Tom Byrne a Town Commissioner who owned a Dublin haulage company. On 20 March 1923 this field at Donnycarney was leased to Parnell's GFC and Mr James McCullough a dairy proprietor. The ground was drained and a building, which had served as a canteen in Colinstown Aerodrome, erected. This became a venue for céilithe and Irish language classes during the 1920s and may represent the earliest social centre of the GAA in Dublin.

From the 1920s onwards the GAA was in a much more sympathetic environment in the Free State. New institutional teams from An Garda Síochána, Defence Forces, Civil Service and teachers[i] were to provide administrators, coaches and playing members. Newly formed insurance companies, with New Ireland Assurance Company to the fore, developed a ground at Killester in 1932 – even at this stage clubs serving inner city catchments had to secure grounds in the then outer suburbs. Without the broad acres of the Phoenix Park it is possible that the GAA in Dublin would not have survived. Rural clubs found it easier to acquire and develop grounds.

Finding and developing a ground in Dublin was a difficult task as the published history of Civil Service GFC reveals. Tom Woulfe details the long haul. Civil Service's pitch at Islandbridge, which was formerly a dump owned by the Board of Works, was leased to the club in 1938. Initially Civil Service was not permitted to plant trees at the western end of the pitch so as not to interfere with the vista to the recently erected War Memorial but the Board of Works relented. Throughout the 1940s livestock en route to the Dublin weekly markets were corralled overnight to earn some income.

There was no prospect of development during the war years and it was not until 1947 that a committee was established to collect funds for a permanent pavilion.

GAA pitch by Wendy Judge

Inter-county football matches were organised; and a young architect in the Board of Works (Liam White) designed the pavilion free of charge. Because much of the building work was voluntary the club was able to ignore wartime building restrictions (still in force) that limited expenditure on buildings for recreational purposes to £750. The pavilion was completed in 1951 at a total cost of £3,000 with £600 coming from the Dublin County Board and Leinster Council. There was no official opening because the club had no money left to fund one. Process and practice in its case was to become a kind of prototype for all ground development: identification and purchase or lease of site; voluntary labour by members; professional services provided free by club members; organised events, collections, raffles and subventions to raise funds. There was no question of funding from the government at this period. Unending hassle over grounds diverted much energy from sorely pressed voluntary groups who essentially only wanted to play a game.

In the report of the Special Committee of Enquiry in Dublin in 1963 there is not a single reference to the term 'community'. Instead the report used the designation 'new residential districts' and encouraged the link between 'local clubs and schools convenient to them' so that 'juvenile teams would be associated with a parish or a particular district'. The background to this approach was the nativist philosophy that had developed in the new Dublin clubs in response to the perceived domination of football and especially hurling in respect of county team membership by migrants from rural Ireland. Much of this attitude was occasioned by the introduction as far back as 1925 of what was known as the Declaration Rule – whereby natives of counties other than Dublin could play in championship competitions in Dublin and then represent their native counties in the national championships if they declared their wish to do so by the Easter of the specific year. This rule created great antagonism between 'native' and 'non-native' clubs and hindered the evolution of a 'community ethos' in the GAA in Dublin. The native clubs countered by pushing through a rule outlawing non-natives from playing for Dublin.

By the late 1960s the term 'community' became very much part of the GAA vocabulary as the association attempted to respond to changing demographic circumstances especially in the context of declining rural populations. Community development had been the prerogative of parish based Catholic agencies, such as Muintir na Tíre, but the new spatial strategies incorporated in the Colin Buchanan and Myles Wright plans of the late 1960s focussed on the regional dimension and urban places. The GAA, however, simply decided to graft urban clubs onto the model of community so long embedded in rural Ireland – the Catholic Church.

It was indeed fortuitous that two of the association's most prescient presidents, both teachers, Alf Ó Muirí (Lurgan, Armagh) and Séamus Ó Riain (Moneygall, Tipperary) held office in the crucial years 1964-67 and 1967-70. Ó Muirí had pioneered one of the first social centres in Lurgan, a deeply polarised community, for Clann Éireann GFC and Ó Riain came from the core of co-operative country where creameries, parish halls and group water schemes were visible examples of community endeavour. In 1969 the GAA established a Community Centre Committee: in 1970 a Club Development Scheme was set-up and earlier in 1963 Ciste na Banban, a system whereby clubs raised money for a weekly national raffle and received four pence for every shilling collected, was developed. The development of pre-fabricated and sectional buildings offset building costs and reduced completion times for projects. On 8 June 1968, the *Gaelic Weekly* articulated the development philosophy: 'The new plan will convert the Association from being an inclusively games playing body into a more community embracing organisation and foresees clubs developing into strong social units'.

Converting philosophy to physical reality was tough work but the new parishes founded since the fifties had the energy and optimism of youth. By the middle 1960s Erin's Isle had grounds at Farnham ready: there were four rooms, 20ft. by 14ft. each. Only dressing rooms and a pitch were allowed since Clause 11 of the leasing agreement stated that there would be 'no bar, no hall and no brothel on the grounds'. St Vincent's club launched its spectacular new development at Raheny in May 1963 with General Secretary Padraig Ó Caoimh remarking: 'In equipping the field as they have done, the St. Vincent's club is but anticipating the pattern of development likely to be followed in the future'. It was by Dublin club standards an impressive arena: a protective wall surrounded the pitch; there was a second pitch for minors; two entrance gates and 12 turnstiles; a concrete pavilion structure with four rooms and hot and cold showers were provided. As with many such ventures there were subsequent additions and improvements:

the considerable sum of £70,000 was invested in extra facilities in 1968.

Despite opposition from both prohibitionists who believed that retailing alcoholic drink was inimical to the association's charter and publicans who were long the beneficiaries of club patronage, the new centres in urban areas adopted the pragmatic decision to apply for licenses to sell alcohol. Vincent's licensed bar was opened in August 1968 and Marcus Wilson, former Dublin and Vincent's player, articulated the rationale behind the concept of the club-cum social centre in *Gaelic Weekly*, 26 October 1968:

'You can't expect wives to be football widows all their lives. When our centre is completed wives will be able to talk to other wives in the ladies room or else play on our 18 hole pitch and putt course which will be opened next March while the children can play on the swings in the playground while the husband is watching or playing the match.

A rather more holistic concept of community was elaborated by Michéal de Búrca of Kilmacud in relation to developments at Glenalbyn House, Stillorgan, opened in August 1966. De Búrca, a primary teacher and native of Tipperary, claimed that Glenalbyn was 'the first liberal community centre sponsored by any sporting organisation and open to members of all affiliations, classes and creeds' [ii]. Indeed he emphasised that the social services committee of the club could, in theory be composed entirely of soccer players. 'Running the place strictly as a GAA club', stated de Búrca, 'would be too narrow, confined and exclusive, and would not deserve the name of a community centre'. The centre was linked to the nearby St John of God Hospital and offered a range of support services to those who experienced difficulty integrating into urban life.

In hindsight the 1960s marked the beginning of a building project which resulted in many clubhouses and grounds which today form as much a part of Dublin's geography as churches and public houses. Na Fianna club rebuilt a pavilion destroyed by fire in 1967; Parnells acquired the Old Garda Station in Coolock village in 1969; Whitehall Gaels founded in 1954, purchased Thorndale Lawn Tennis Grounds in 1965. In the greenfield countryside of the south-west outer suburbs a fortuitous sighting of an advertisement for a 4.5 acre freehold site on Firhouse Road (*Gaelic Weekly,* 11 Feb. 1967) spurred on the foundation of St Enda's Gaelic Sport and Athletic Club. Purchased with the assistance of the County Board for £4,000, development plans were provided gratis by club member, Pat Corrigan. With just two juvenile teams at this stage, the new club canvassed widely for funds: 'We have just completed a very successful raffle with great help from supporters all over the country and across the water, circulated through Gael Linn'.

1970-2000

Population must inform any discussion on developments in Dublin from the 1960s onwards. There are two central elements to Dublin's population, its aggregate growth and its internal distribution. Both had significant implications for the Gaelic Athletic Association in the county. At the GAA's beginning in Dublin the population of the county was 419,000 (1881 census); in 2001 it was 1,122,600. In 1901 over half of the county's population, 261,105 (58.25 per cent) lived in the inner city i.e. the fourteen wards between the two canals; by 1996 this number was reduced to 80,560 or 7.6 per cent of the county's population. The McNamee Commission of 1971 was an attempt to come to terms with both the population surge and competition for the GAA arising from the growing popularity of the English soccer premiership and England's victory in the 1966 World Cup. There was little experience within the GAA of dealing with cities growing as rapidly as Dublin. The organisation never adapted any prototype in respect of the territorial organisation of the Association in Dublin beyond the vague directive in the McNamee Commission that clubs 'should be based on population groupings rather than the traditional parish or other boundaries'.

During the 1970s the GAA in Dublin followed the Catholic Church to the suburbs. It was an extraordinary decade in which 57 new parishes were created in the county Dublin part of the archdiocese. Some comparative perspective is afforded by the fact that 12 new parishes were formed in the 1980s and six in the 1990s. It could be argued that the trinity of the Catholic parish, the primary school and the Dublin football team of the 1970s saved the GAA in Dublin. One example will suffice to outline the process of club formation. The Catholic parish of Willington was constituted in December 1975 from Templeogue parish, which was itself a relatively new parish having been formed from Terenure in 1964.[iii] A parish centre was marked initially by new primary schools, Bishop Shanahan

and Bishop Galvin, a hut for a Catholic Church and a typical mid-1970s shopping mall. Participation in under-10 Street Leagues and a parish sponsored Summer Project in 1978 brought together a group at a meeting in Bishop Galvin Primary School on 9 September 1978 at which St Judes Football Club was formally launched.[iv] Club officers were drawn from a mix of Dublin natives and rural migrants, all new to the suburb. Financed through the age-old devices of cake sales, raffles and quizzes and supported by a sympathetic group of energetic young teachers, many from Gaelic games heartlands, the club developed.

Initially the club attempted in a novel manner to involve St Jude's Soccer Club in a joint building venture but this failed to develop and the club decided to proceed in July 1986 when it launched a monthly draw with a target of selling 2,000 tickets for £100 each. Fergus O'Brien, T.D. for the constituency and Minister for State for Local Government, promised a grant of £50,000, provided the club could begin building by the end of the calendar year. The promise of funding galvanised the project committee and planning permission was sought and granted by the end of November. An objection by the Local Resident's Association was made on the basis that the grant from Local Government was for a community centre and not specifically for a GAA facility and that consequently a community group should manage the clubhouse. The objectors made it clear that not everyone in the new suburb perceived the GAA and its members as the community. Apart from the inevitable delay, the objection raised the more serious possibility that the grant could be withdrawn. Delicate negotiations led to the withdrawal of the planning objection, construction began and the clubhouse was officially opened on 11 October 1987.[v]

Dublin clubs on the eve of the new millennium defy definition. Their territories are undefined in any rulebook but have evolved with the city in a kind of survival of the fittest scenario. Connections with individual Catholic parishes in the 1970s and 1980s have been to some degree maintained. No regulatory body has placed a ceiling on the number of members a club may have so that Dublin clubs range in size from the so-called super clubs such as Ballyboden St. Endas, with an estimated 2,500 members, 66 teams, playing pitches, a social centre in prosperous middle-class suburbia to St. Joseph's/O'Connell Boys in the north – inner city with 65 members, 2 teams, no social centre, dependent on Dublin Corporation pitches in Fairview Park. In 1971, the Commission on the GAA envisaged that in urban centres a catchment area with a population of 4,000 would be sufficient to maintain a club. More recently the Strategy Review Committee report[vi] recommended that, 'In urban areas no club should be allowed to serve a catchment population of more than 25,000; in rural areas and towns with a population of less than 80,000 no club should serve a catchment population of more than 5,000'. Despite the recent growth in population, and this is one of the great paradoxes in the history of the GAA in Dublin, the number of affiliated clubs have either declined in number or remained static. A recent list gives a total of 88 GAA clubs of whom 52 (30 north of the Liffey, 22 to the south) had clubhouses/social centres. Anecdotal evidence suggests that founding, financing and maintaining a GAA club will be much more difficult in the new outer suburbs with immigrant populations and generally weaker ties to the Catholic parish. But then it was never easy for the Gaelic Athletic Association in Dublin.

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i. During the early history of the GAA in Dublin the successful teams were communities of the workplace such as Kickhams, representing the drapers, Young Irelands representing the breweries and Faughs representing the licensed provision's trade. The teams associated with defined territories were not as successful until St Laurence O' Tooles in the 1920s and then St Vincent's in the late 1940s and onwards. Today it is the team of the territory that reigns supreme. **ii.** *Irish Times,* 20 Dec. 1969 **iii** *Dublin Diocesan Guidebook*, 2004 **iv** *St Judes 25, 1978-2003, Growing with theCommunity* (2003) **v** Total cost was £360,000 financed by 130,000 (draw), 50,000 (grant from Local Government), 30,000 (grant from Dublin County Council). The balance was borrowed but in order to avoid the penal interest charges of the late 1980s, 50 members guaranteed funds and another draw raised 110,000. **vi** Strategy Review Committee report, (2002) p.130

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The Village: Building Sustainable Community

GAVIN HARTE

A building or a town will only be alive to the extent that it is governed by the timeless way.
Christopher Alexander

This first 'Celtic Tiger' building boom occurred in Georgian Ireland from the mid 18th century to the mid 19th century. Design was focused on the street as the core model of design and speculative developers built rows of terraced houses along with market squares and civic buildings that now provide the backbone of many Irish towns and villages. Cloughjordan in North Tipperary, the future home of *The Village* project, is an example of this, being remodelled in the late 18th century to include a village square in front of the Church of Ireland on an east-west main street. There is a robustness to these designs that suggests that in another 200 years these superb examples of urban form will still be as dynamic and lively as they were 200 years ago. This I suggest is the timeless way.

So what are we doing now? If we apply the timelessness test to semi-detached suburbia, and project the model 200 years into the future, will we similarly be able to say that they are governed by a timeless quality?

It was a passionate belief in sustainable development that drove me to start Sustainable Projects Ireland Limited, better known as *The Village*, back in 1998. As the idea matured I began to realise that sustainability is in fact an extremely elusive ideal and that perhaps a better definition would be 'degrees of sustainability'. I knew that I wanted to explore development from within a more social and cultural context because I felt that these aspects were missing from our current model. Certainly the economic model of house building has proven enormously successful but often at the expense of the social and environmental aspects. I began to understand that a vital element was missing from the design of much of our modern urban form: a conception of time. This design element has become alien to our modern way of thinking it and can often be difficult to explain and to recognise within our current cultural understanding.

Precedents

There are a growing number examples of new 'sustainable' settlements all around the world - some of the better known ones include *Ithaca Ecovillage* in New York and *Village Homes* in Davis, California, and the *Torsted Vest* project and *Landsforningen Økosamfund* both in Denmark. While all these projects are very different from each other they all share some qualities. According to the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) sustainable settlements typically seek to build on various combinations of three key core dimensions, these are:

1) Social/Community
2) Ecological
3) Cultural/Spiritual

Over the last 10 years GEN (http://gen.ecovillages.org/) has been developing the concept of sustainability auditing in an attempt to provide measuring rods for existing villages and communities and to compare their current status with ideal goals for ecological, social, economic and spiritual sustainability. This is a growing global movement, and while the jury is still out on a clear definition of sustainable development, interest in the concept is growing rapidly and becoming mainstream. Ireland has tremendous advantages in creating these 'new sustainable communities' because so many of our towns and villages still hold a strong connection with their original sustainable past.

The Village project in Cloughjordan has been built on five basic principles these are;

1) The development should be people led: in other words the company should be a non for-profit company limited by guarantee and managed by its members.
2) The principals of sustainable development should be used to lead the project.
3) The development requires a local focus where economic activity, social connection and environmental sensitivity would respect the site and its surrounding bioregion.
4) The design would have a quality of life focus, including civic infrastructure and common lands held in common ownership.
5) The development should be affordable.

People Led

Similar to the credit union movement of the 1970s *The Village* project seeks to create a common bond between its members. This bond is represented in three ways. There is common capital which is linked to common

agreements that set out to define degrees of common ownership.

This fundamental principle of cooperation through an agreed common bond is a core value of the company and it has exhibited a remarkable successes in raising the necessary capital to get the project to the point where we, the members of the company, now own 70 acres of land in the beautiful village of Cloughjordan in North Tipperary . The company has secured outline planning permission for 132 houses, the site works are due to commence this year and to date over 110 individuals and families have bought into the project and made a down payment of 15,000 euro each.

This social fabric that holds the projects together is based on a number of binding and non-binding agreements between members. These agreements include a social charter which defines an agreed process for decision-making; a membership agreement which deals with investments and other commitments to the company; an ecological charter which sets out to create targets for the design of all the buildings and land use; and finally, a system of labour commitments to the project whereby individual members commit an agreed number of hours per year as their voluntary input into the project.

Sustainable Development

For *The Village*, sustainable development is rooted in the concept of 'Local Agenda 21'. LA21 was adopted by more than 178 governments at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janerio, Brazil, in 1992. It is defined in simple terms as a development that attempts to 'meet the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.' Again this is a complex question. What are the needs of the present? What is compromising? How can we define the needs of future generations? All these issues are relative; they offer more of a mood than substance. Sustainable development is more about the way we live than a clear blueprint on how to live. In an effort to set this mood for the project the members of *The Village* agreed to produce an 'Ecological Charter' that would reduce the ecological footprint of the overall development.

In the current climate of increasing energy costs the eco-village's community seeks to reduce its energy demands and to use renewable sources of energy where possible. Recently North Tipperary County Council in partnership with *The Village* secured funding under the European 'Concerto' programme for a 'sustainable energy community' in four of the surrounding villages around Cloughjordan. This funding will also part-finance a district heating system within the development to supply all houses with space heating and hot water fuelled by locally sourced wood chips.

Sustainable urban drainage has been used throughout the development. The use of porous surfaces for roads and paths wherever possible, the attenuation of water on-site via

holding ponds, swales and bio-filters all means that water will be retained rather than piped away as is so often the case in modern developments.

Local Focus

The eco-village at Cloughjordan contains a series of elements that attempts to create an underlying foundation for a more durable and holistic system of design. These design elements start with an initial investigation of the existing infrastructure that was inherited with the site. These existing site influences included the existing farm roads, a number of historical and archaeological features and a network of hedgerows and mature trees that would facilitate a future connection with nature. The purpose of this initial investigation was to try and minimise the impact of the development on the site and its inherited elements.

Another important feature in the selection of the site was its southern aspect. The development's housing has a general East to West alignment and in the creation of individual plots, the setting out of the building lines and the location of vegetation, care has been taken to maximise the solar gain available to each house.

It is vital that the project substantially links into the existing community at both a physical and social level. Cloughjordan already has a rich and diverse community. Knitting into this existing fabric requires careful and sensitive efforts on the part of the company and its members. Already, at least 10 families have moved to the area setting up small businesses and becoming very active in local community life. A very important feature in the final selection of Cloughjordan was the connection from the site via the now derelict Lime Tree pub to the main street of the existing village. This will allow a new spatial and social spine to directly link the old village to its new extension. This street will ensure that the development is 'open' to the public providing a new streetscape with overlap and interplay into Cloughjordan proper. Add to this the social and civic infrastructure that already exists within the village and there is a very exciting opportunity for symbiotic exchange between the whole community and bio-region going forward.

Quality of Life

The development is clustered around a network of walkable zones and uses the UK concept of 'Homes Zones' where the car will be a guest and people will dominate.

There is a commitment to a softer and more natural landscape and layout through a system of 'Greenways'. This will provide alternative pedestrian and bicycle networks throughout the development and link playgrounds with allotments and other areas of quiet and relaxation. By re-using some of the existing farm roads and paths the landscape also retains a sense of its original shape and delight. When all of these elements are drawn together the development provides a choice of routes and modes of transport to create a permeability and movement that reflects the complex movement of people that is required within a sustainable community.

A very early principle in the design of *The Village* project was the agreement that the overall estate should be divided into three clear parts. One-third of the estate will be used for housing, a third will be used for agriculture, and the final third will be dedicated to woodland and nature space. The commitment to biodiversity within the development is founded on the principle of permaculture or permanent agriculture as defined by Bill Molison in Australia. This acceptance of the natural world into the development involves the inclusion of wildlife corridors throughout the estate, while also bringing into each area the rich biological diversity that can be found in the adjoining woodland to the north of the estate and along the stream that flows through the southern part of the land.

Affordability

Sustainable development is the integration of the social, environmental and economic pillars of our society. For this reason it was essential that the project should be affordable. When the company started in 1999 it set the very ambitious target to provide a fully serviced site at an average cost of IR£30,000 or €38,100. Seven years down the line and with more experience behind us this price has risen some bit to about €45,000. A final price will be set when the company signs contracts for site works to commence later this year.

The Village project was designed to be replicable and is not about reinventing the wheel. Rather, it is an attempt by ordinary people to take control of their living environment and create a community that will survive the test of time.

With thanks to Solearth for permission to use their images.

Gavin Harte is a founding member of The Village and director of An Taisce

9

Commodity or Community?
The role of urban public space in the early 21st Century

PHILIP LAWTON

The more the myth of empty impersonality, in popular forms, becomes the common sense of a society, the more will that populace feel morally justified in destroying the essence of urbanity, which is that men can act together, without the compulsion to be the same.
Richard Sennett, The Fall of Public Man

I

On Friday the 16th of June 2006, Dublin City Council, in conjunction with The Digital Hub, organised a 'Forum on Urbanism', with the aim of discussing the future of the Liberties area. The event was attended by representatives of the city council, local politicians, long time residents of the Liberties area, new residents of the area, along with architects, planners and other interest groups. Whilst I attended this event more as a matter of interest in overall urban issues, I was overwhelmed by how dominated the discussion became by the topic of public space. Without trying to go in to the issues raised throughout this discussion in too much detail, it was clear that there was a large degree of difference between those responsible for the provision of public space and those that use it in their everyday lives, as to what exactly 'public space' was, and what it meant for the area. It also became clear throughout this discussion just how important public space was in terms of fostering and promoting a sense of community in an urban area that was changing so rapidly. Whilst there is no doubt about the rapidity of the changes facing the Liberties area, it can be seen as representative of the changes happening in urban areas throughout Ireland at present. In this short piece I aim to address the ideals and realities in the provision of public space, and the role it might play in community building for the future. Much of the discussion is the outcome of ongoing research on public space in Dublin, London and Amsterdam, and is therefore heavily biased towards spaces in these cities. However, the aim is to draw some general conclusions about the nature of public space in the early 21st century, which may be applied to community building for the future.

II

The 'image of the city' – the social and physical condition of the public domain of our towns, cities and suburbs – is often seen as a reflection of the overall condition and state of our economy, and society more generally. Meanwhile, and directly linked to this, the level of interaction that takes place between various people within these spaces in their everyday life is seen as being reflective of our core community values. In this regard the focal points of our everyday life – the 'everyday' space in which we interact with each other, such as the streets, parks and shopping centres – come to be viewed as symbolic of the nature of our society.

Whilst it is often taken for granted, the term 'community' is a multi-faceted and diverse concept. Firstly we can think of it in a spatial sense, which is defined by people living within a 'local community', sharing some common experiences and backgrounds. Such notions of community are often strongest in long established working class urban areas. In this regard the link between the image of the city and the general state of community relations may prove somewhat paradoxical. This can be seen in the way in which neighbourhoods that are subject to urban renewal, or regeneration plans, are often described using words such as 'blight', 'decay' and 'dereliction', to promote the positive impact that change will bring. In this regard the physical appearance of our urban areas is given precedence over social and community gain, in that it is seen in and of itself as both an outcome of, and solution to, society's ills. In this process it seems that the networks, and community ties that are not visible to those responsible for urban change, and which are not inscribed within the urban landscape are ignored and passed over in favour of a new urban image. Although the perceived threat of redevelopment to a neighbourhood may often result in a strengthening of community ties in the short-term, it is the new vision that often seems to win out over the long-term. So whilst terms such as 'community' and 'public space' are often used in planning circles and development circles as a means of place marketing, truly meaningful ways of fitting new developments into their urban context become lost along the way in favour of the promotion of certain lifestyle images.

Over the last few decades we have seen the emergence of a new form of community, which exists across space comprising of a collection of individuals with common interests. These communities can maintain their linkages through enhanced communication technologies such as the internet and mobile phones. Such technologies may be used as a means of gelling these spatially unbound communities together, or may also become the basis of fully-fledged cyber-communities in and of themselves.

Despite the ever-changing nature of the concept of community, there is still the reality of a collective community of people living together in a large urban area. A city such as Dublin, which is experiencing such a rapid level of change, is becoming increasingly defined by such a multi-faceted notion of community. With this in mind, when we hear of a lack of social cohesion and some sort of breakdown in contemporary society, we often also hear that we have lost a sense of community, and that we now live in an anonymous world of strangers, who are not interested in involving themselves in the intricacies of everyday life. Despite this there is still no doubt as to the existence of strong community ties within urban neighbourhoods at the local level, and collective pride in the city as a whole. For ties such as these to exist there must also be spaces in which these connections can be made and fostered. The spaces of the city, and suburbs – streets, parks, squares and commercial spaces – must therefore be allowed to become major focal points in our everyday lives. This, however, is no simple matter, as the danger in specific public spaces being defined for certain communities may itself result in the further division and segregation of city life. Therefore the role of public space needs to be thought of as a means to creating fully accessible urban space, in which multiple users or user groups can interact on a day-to-day level.

III

As mentioned earlier, Dublin, like many other European cities, is presently experiencing somewhat of an urban renaissance. As can be seen in interventions such as the boardwalk and the upgrading of several public parks, such as Mountjoy Square, public space, or the wider public domain, has taken centre stage in some of these changes. Whilst there is an almost infinite degree to which we can think about public space and the city, there are three broad typologies into which it can be divided. Firstly, we can think of the public space of parks, which may or may not be symbolic in their design and layout, such as St Stephens Green and The Garden of Remembrance. Secondly, we can think of spaces that serve certain definitive roles, such as playgrounds and sports areas, for example the public park on the corner of Sean MacDermott Street and Gardiner Street in Dublin, or sub-spaces of larger parks and green spaces. Finally, but most importantly in terms of this discussion, there is the 'everyday spaces' of the city: streets, public squares, and increasingly privately owned and managed spaces of consumption, such as shopping centres. These spaces take on a heightened importance, as they tend to be the spaces that are used in both an everyday manner, and for particular functions and activities such as parades and other forms of spectacle. It is in these spaces, however, that the ideology of public space becomes most contentious. These are the spaces in which city life becomes visible to all, and in which conflict over life choices is most likely to occur.

Recent years have witnessed a shift in the nature of these public spaces in a manner that is often referred to as the 'privatisation of public space'. There are numerous aspects to this debate. The most literal example of this is the manner in which public land is given to private developers in return for public facilities under a public private partnership (PPP). The most striking example of which is the development of a public park on Marine Road in Dun Laoghaire into the Pavilion complex, featuring apartments, various shops, restaurants and bars and a gym in return for the provision of a theatre and other public facilities between the late 1990s and early 2000s. Whilst it has helped to reactivate this area of the town, a much lesser intervention would have done the same without the need for the ownership and control of a formerly public park being ceded by Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council.

In general, however, the term is used to refer to the increased trend for us to live our everyday life in private spaces, such as business estates, shopping centres and privately owned housing enclaves, or gated communities, and the increased influence of private forces within public space, such as can be seen in 'Business Improvement Districts' (BIDs). Aside from the issues surrounding the conditions under which a development may have been granted planning permission based on public use, there are two separate, but related issues that are raised by a tendency towards private space. Firstly, we are spending an increasing amount of time in privately owned and managed spaces, and are in danger of taking them as a simulacrum of the world as being the real thing. Such spaces are designed and managed so as to maintain a certain social order that is in keeping with a corporate or commercial image, and are aimed at consumption as an aim in and of itself. The latest example of this is the trend for newly built shopping centres to be dedicated as the 'town centre' of long established towns such as Dundrum. Whilst it could be argued that such spaces are merely following in the lines of market spaces

going back to the dawn of cities, the reality is that these spaces are built as reflections of the commodities that they are selling, and as such are dictated purely by market forces. The right of access is therefore largely controlled according to these principles, and anything that does not fit in will not be tolerated, and moved on. Secondly, and directly linked to this, is the fact that 'real' public space is becoming increasingly influenced by the ideals and standards of such private space. In essence the real issue at stake is that the predominance of such space in the central areas of our towns and cities divides the public realm in to different parcels. The ordering and control of the city in this manner does nothing to enhance community life in the city beyond that which is orientated towards commercial gain, or the upkeep of a corporate image. In essence such spaces are more about the promotion of the commodity than the community.

One of the most quintessential examples of this typology of urban space is Canary Wharf in London's docklands. Like a modern day citadel, it separates itself from its surroundings by means of a moat and drawbridges, which surround most of the estate and allow it to be kept secure from any possible terrorist attack. Whether such methods are justifiable or not is incidental to the fact that this reduces the use of space to lowest common denominator activity. For example, access to the estate from Poplar in East London is via a footbridge over the Aspen Way, and DLR, and then via another bridge over the water. There is no real visual connection between this busy urban neighbourhood and one of the world's most powerful business enclaves. As an urban space it appears similar to many twentieth century environments, except there is always that feeling that something is missing. It is, in a sense, a city without any of the hard aspects of urbanity: the city without the city. Private police patrol the grounds and a sign can be read at various locations around the estate saying:

This is private property and no right of way, public or private, is acknowledged over it. Any use of this land is with the permission of the landowner. The ways on this land have NOT been dedicated as highways, bridleways or footpaths nor is there any intention to so dedicate them.

Further to this, the main shopping functions of the area are dropped into the ground below, which in essence becomes the main-street of the estate. The interaction between the public and the real street above is therefore further reduced, and the 'public' domain further divided up according to commercial interests.

A similar type of urban space can also be seen in more central areas of London. The difference with many of these spaces is that instead of demarcating themselves off as being different, and separating themselves from the surrounding urban fabric, these spaces merge into the surrounding streets, and become difficult to distinguish from the public domain, apart from small signs informing the user that they are on private property. The latest incarnation of such space is Paternoster Square beside St Paul's Cathedral. Although the design by William Whitfield & Partners has been thought out according to the principles of Camillo Sitte's *City Planning According to Artistic Principles,* the nature of this space is largely dictated by the fact that it is private property. Whilst this is not made directly clear through the design and layout of the space, private security guards ensure that the space is managed according to the desires of the various businesses and companies located on the square. Issues of control within this space became particularly apparent during the period after the bombings of July 7th 2005, when people taking photographs from the square were restricted from doing so. Despite being protected by the 'City Walkway' legislation of 1967, which designates certain privately owned open spaces of The City of London as being open to the public by law, spaces such as this are gradually becoming more controlled by private forces and management companies.

Two of Dublin's largest ever urban renewal projects – Temple Bar and The IFSC – both illustrate similar tendencies to those described in London. Whilst a space such as Meeting House Square, which is now referred to as a 'semi-private public square', may be used for various forms of outdoor public concerts and film viewings, which enhance the public realm of Temple Bar, from the perspective of its everyday use it lies desolate and empty of anything that could possibly allow it to be used by a passing public. Meanwhile, the plaza of Temple Bar Square is gradually being taken up almost completely by seating belonging to the various restaurants surrounding the square, effectively transforming the nature of the square into privatised space.

Whilst the IFSC area is very different to the nature of Canary Wharf, it is still possible to see similarities in the manner of control by private security guards, and operates in a manner akin to private space. Take Mayor Square

for example, which according to a sign in the middle of the square is presently 'Dublin's newest public space, a popular location for events and the occasional student demonstration.' However, as indicated by various signs on the square, the North side of the square is privately owned and therefore controlled by private forces. Whilst the space seems to function as a collective unit between both sides, public space that is provided by private means become defined, and regulated by the will of private forces. The square is therefore divided between public and private ownership. The major difference between Mayor Square and many other commercially orientated spaces is that the location of the National College of Ireland gives a focal point to the square that is beyond that of the normal private or semi-private functions that we might come to associate with such spaces. However, the various signs on the north side of the square indicating the ownership of the space points to the fact that privately owned space that becomes part of the public realm will always become defined by those with the most power to define what it should or should not be used for. In the majority of case this becomes a question of the dominant land-use in the surroundings, ownership, or, a combination of both. In this regard, a space like Mayor Square is a form of hybrid space in that the mixed nature of its ownership automatically stops it from being defined by one interest group.

Again, it must be made clear that such spaces – in both London and Dublin – play a role in that they are the focal points in the lives of people who work and live within these city spaces. The problem, again, is that these spaces are gradually becoming accepted as being the norm, and, as indicated earlier, are starting to impact on the public realm of our more established city areas. As pointed out by the political scientist Margaret Kohn, one of the ironies of the re-imagination and redesign of city-centre areas is that whilst the out of town centre increasingly tries to replicate the feeling and look of the streets and squares of the city, the city centre finds itself replicating the social order of the shopping centre. Parallel to this, the city must also use the same advertising tactics as the suburban shopping centres that it finds itself in competition with. The clearest example of this can be seen in the changes made to O'Connell Street in recent years. In essence the street has been completely restructured in an effort to attract new types of shops and rid the street of those sorts of functions that are seen as being inappropriate for the 'main street' of the city, if not country. The logic behind this, as indicated in the Integrated Area Plan of 1998 is that different types of shops will produce a different form of behaviour, and a different 'culture' on the street. Whilst often thought of as a meaningless monument, the Spire is at the centre of this transformation in that it is aimed at giving the city a new logo, which in the greater scheme of things is used as an attempt to 'sell the city' on the global stage for tourism, whilst also promoting the centre of Dublin as a shopping destination. This is highlighted by the use of the Spire as the 'I' in Dublin Business Association's 'Dublin: Make The City Yours' advertising campaign on both television and various banners around the city centre. Meanwhile points of social interaction, beyond that of meeting points such as the Spire itself, have been removed for fear of the type of activity such locations become associated with. At the time that the changes to the street were finished in June 2006, the insertion of temporary sculptures of hares by Barry Flanagan provided both points of interest, and places in which people could sit and watch the world go by. Without these temporary sculptures the newly completed street is devoid of any points of social interaction bar the shops that already existed, and is instead defined by wide expanses of pavements, which it would seem are to be used for private seating to make up for the lack of public benches on the street. Such logic readily defines how consumption is the main aim of the permanent civic improvements to the street.

IV

Whilst I have spent much of this article discussing the negative effects which increased commercialism can have in terms of building inclusive urban space, it does not necessarily mean that any space that is produced today is automatically given over to this purpose. This can be seen on various different levels, and also proves that public space, to some extent, always involves some sort of level of control, whether it be through minor or major interventions. The point, however, is that the privately driven vision of public space is not the only way of providing space for public interaction. From Trafalgar Square in London, with its 'World Squares for All' campaign or Dam Square in Amsterdam to the much smaller Peckham Square in South London or Mercatorplein in the west of Amsterdam, such spaces can be used as a means of promoting and enhancing a sense of place and community spirit in terms of both the wider urban

community or in a local context. Whether it is performances by young people living in a local area, festivals that attract all members of the community, such as the 'I Peckham' festival, or the use of Dam Square, or O'Connell Street, in the celebration of a national festival, such spaces can become key in defining our attachment to a certain place. The issue in terms of public space and community building is therefore attempting to develop spaces that can double as spaces of everyday usage, and act as venues in which different communities can come together in celebration, or as the case may be, in dispute.

The construction of Will Alsop's Stirling Prize winning library is often seen as redefining the image of Peckham. Whilst this is often seen to be the case due to its iconic presence on the surrounding landscape, the reality of the situation is far more apparent in examining the role of Peckham Square as a social space. The provision of squares such as Peckham Square or Mercatorplein creates a space that becomes an extension of people's living rooms in terms of their everyday life, but also provides a space where the people of the locality can come together in celebration of different events or to promote the various talents and activities of the community. This is particularly relevant to urban areas that are undergoing dramatic change in terms of their population, and that accommodate people from many different ethnic communities and social classes. So whilst spaces such as Trafalgar Square and Dam Square are used to try and define a whole city, for both tourists and residents alike, smaller spaces such as Mercatorplein and Peckham Square become spaces that bring together different communities living in the same locality.

That is not to say that spaces such as this are not without a form of regulation, or a type of exclusivity. Forms of regulation that can be seen in areas aimed at commercial uses or spaces of up-market rejuvenation can also be witnessed in spaces that are promoted as being purely 'public spaces'. This can be seen in alcohol bans in the case of London's Trafalgar Square, or a Cannabis ban as in the case of Mercatorplein. City leaders and officials are often at pains to deal with issues that are perceived as problematic in terms of how both insiders and outsiders may perceive different city spaces. This is not always with a view to attracting investment or enhancing the marketability of certain places, but is often related to localized pressures regarding different issues. Therefore they may often introduce byelaws that regulate activities that are seen as being problematic. A major issue with these forms of laws and bye laws is that they tend not to solve the issue which may need to be realistically addressed, but may instead force it to the edges of the public realm. Whether this is an outcome of people's real fears, or of the influence of privately managed spaces in the city is not entirely clear.

V

Instead of looking at the public domain of cities as a single entity, we need to start looking at it as parcels, which are increasingly separated from each other in terms of socio-spatial difference. Those people who are viewed as not in keeping with the new status quo are moved on from place to place as the city reinvents what different spaces are, and who they are for. Space in this regard becomes managed in a similar manner to a theatre. For many such as the cultural geographer Don Mitchell, 'People become comfortable by giving up their active political involvement in space and acquiescing instead in becoming spectators of the urban "scene".' Many central spaces have therefore become more controlled and managed according to the needs and desires of the global economy. Meanwhile as those who are not seen as suitable for this urban image are moved on to new spaces, perceived problems are exacerbated and contained in one area, which becomes the new 'no-go' area of the city.

Despite being promoted as being a neutral container of public life, public space can therefore be seen to be increasingly central to the cultural economy of cities, and dependent on various rules and regulations as a means of maintaining what is viewed as being an acceptable image. Large-scale public areas that become central to urban regeneration plans, such as the O'Connell Street Integrated Area Plan and Smithfield Market are increasingly about following a formula that guarantees economic success and limiting conflict through design and management. What can therefore presently be witnessed in Dublin is an aestheticisation of the politics of city marketing. By this I mean that the public space of our cities is constructed in a manner that may be compared to other western city spaces, but at the same time have something to demarcate it as being 'different'. This form of iconographic distinction, and environmental standardization may come in varying forms depending on the part of the city, but at its core is the control of space for the promotion of a certain urban consciousness.

Whilst it would be inaccurate to say that the public realm of Dublin is completely dominated by commercial interests, there are few new spaces being developed where the idea of 'community' or community building is seen as a central focus. Whilst, as the Peckham and Mercatorplein examples have illustrated, issues of power and control are alway a factor, public space can still play a vital role in enhancing and promoting a feeling of community spirit, at both a local and wider urban scale. Major civic spaces in Dublin presently seem more orientated towards the symbolic rather than as spaces of everyday life. Whilst spaces such as Smithfield and Meeting House Square can all be put to full utilisation during events and festivals, they do not seem to be orientated towards promoting the gathering of an informal public on a day-to-day basis. Meanwhile, spaces such as Mercatorplein, Peckham Square, Dam Square and Trafalgar Square illustrate the importance of containing the degree to which commercial functions are allowed to dominate public space. On a lesser scale, the inclusion of the National College of Ireland on Mayor Square, along with events, such as the Dublin City Cycle, help to enhance its use outside the realm of commercial use. Whilst there will always be a certain amount of selectivity by the general public in terms of choosing spaces to use on a day-to-day basis, public space in which various communities of the city can come together is still essential for the promotion of a democratic and functional society. Whilst it may be deemed idealistic and unrealistic by some, the creation of spaces that are protected from domination by commercial functions, where various different activities are tolerated together is essential for the creation of an inclusive society, and the fostering of a sense of community in a rapidly changing urban environment.

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10

Street Character

DANIEL RYAN

I've always enjoyed the Nolli map of Rome and its derivations because of the manner in which they claim public spaces for the street. However a layer is missing from them; one that shows the fleeting places created by congregations of people. On a shopping thoroughfare there is an assumption that indoor space is for consumption while out of doors people are free to express themselves.

In fact, this freedom of expression becomes a source of income[i] as street performers carve spaces in the flow of people, slowing them down and entertaining them on the way. As buskers must negotiate shops, street form, crowd flow and the weather, the study of this community offers a means to understand the character of Grafton Street.

Method

Four different performers were interviewed, with one giving a tour of the street, pointing out areas of importance for busking. Performers were photographed in June at weekends, when crowds are largest. Then over two consecutive Saturdays in July the crowds and buskers were mapped at two hour intervals between 12pm & 2am.

A Collection of Pitches

The space where a busker performs is known as a pitch. Preferred 'pitches' for buskers are located at the top of the street by St. Stephen's Green; opposite Bewley's Cafe by Johnson Court; and between Wicklow St. and Duke St. These spaces consistently attract large crowds over the course of the day. A figure-ground map does not show the reality of the 14,000 people passing through it over an hour[ii]. With this number of people, the empty pockets around buskers, break the street down into a series of small rooms walled by spectators.

Busker etiquette consists of two simple rules

1. Stay out of another performer's line of site
2. Stay out of earshot of another performer.

These rules of visual and acoustic separation ensure tolerance of buskers for one another's performances. Shops can respond to them by blasting radio out onto the street to remove them from the vicinity. During peak hours these two rules give rise to a consistent spacing of performers along the street but do not give an indication of crowd size. Generally musicians line one side of the street with the Living Statues opposite. I did not manage to determine the cause of this. At times there is a symbiosis between the performer and the building behind such as that shown in the image of *El Che* outside a cigar shop.

Opening Hours

Performers arrive around 11am and are found there until 5am at the weekends. The number of buskers reflects the footfall on the street. This is dependant on shop and pub opening hours as well as tram arrival times. Surges of pedestrians are witnessed every five minutes as each Luas tram unloads its passengers at *Faiche Stiabhna*.

There is a marked change in the street once shops shut after 7pm when it changes from a destination to a thoroughfare. Most performers move on to Temple Bar, with a few musicians locating themselves around ATM machines and close to the fast food restaurants - the only signs of life on the street. Musicians are still spaced evenly on the street, only fewer in number. With no shops or residents to object, the size of the aural space increases dramatically. While earlier this would have scared off sober shoppers, at night time, it is a means to attract drunken tips in exchange for singalongs.

Minimal Infrastructure

The staging of an event is created with a minimum of props, all of which keeps the focus on the performer. A beer crate provides a little height; a cap suffices as a till; ropes and chains define the edge of a performance.

For the living statues the costume is the act. Spectators' camera-phones are the main props of the performance. Props are often multifunctional. The contortionist Bendy Emma uses a perspex box as a stand to attract attention at the beginning of the performance; as a container for her body; and afterwards to carry her gear when moving on.

The street furniture also plays a role – filtering the crowd, offering places to linger and defining the area of the pitch. Even the topography is of use: 'Most of the costume guys work the other side of the street but I like to work this side because there is a slight slope towards you.' [iii]

1. PIGMAN (stamps on crate causing bucket to rattle)
2. Beercrate (400 x 300 x 275mm stage)
3. Steel bucket (for donations)
4. Bag (for wig & storage of money)

1. Glass Box - to contain Rope, Hat & Bendy Emma
2. Rope - to define the edge of the performance space
3. Hat - to collect money
4. Bendy Emma

1. Che Guevara lookalike (aka Ramon Perez)
2. Stage (Tin Box with pictures of the real Che)
3. Collection box
4. Compañeros
5. Cigar Shop

STREET ACTIVITY

13h30

21h00

LEGEND: = Public Access = No Public Access = Audible Area = Crowd Edge = Performer

POPULARITY

13h30

CROWD SIZE | PERFORMANCE TYPE

1 Street Artist

2 Musician - Plastic Paddy

3 Musician - Guitarist
a. Shop Music - River Island

4 Living Statue - Goblin

5 Musicians - Classical Quintet

6 Living Statue - The Silver Man

7 Musicians - Jazz Trio

8 Living Statue - Clown

9 Living Statue - Elvis

10 Street Performer - Mime
c. Shop Music - The Loft Newsagent
d. Flower Sellers

11 Living Statue - Leprechaun

12 Musician - Singer-songwriter

e. Flower Sellers

13 Street Performer - Puppetteer

14 Musician - Accordianist

f Info Stand & Protest - Falun Gong

21h00

CROWD SIZE | PERFORMANCE TYPE

1. Musicians - Samba Drummers

a. Shop Music - The Loft Newsagent

2. Musicians - Jazz Duo

3. Musician - Whistle

LEGEND: [filled figure] = 10 people [outline figure] = 0 people

10

Crowd Form

Most crowds on the street tend towards a horseshoe shape varying between a shallow arc and deep ellipse. As well as the steps outlined in the crowd formation diagram, the street grain exerts a strong presence on the success of a crowd. Units vary in width on the street from 2.7m to 50m. Performers position themselves at a point equidistant between two shop entrances; the greater the distance, the larger the width of the crowd possible. The largest units, between Wicklow St. & Duke St. form the most lucrative point for performance.

As noted in the crowd formation diagram, people initially stop by bollards and the edges of buildings across the street from a busker. Jan Gehl explores the edge zone in a comprehensive manner in *Life Between Buildings*[iv]. A place that is initially useful to discreetly survey a performance by a single person, becomes a communal area when others act similarly.

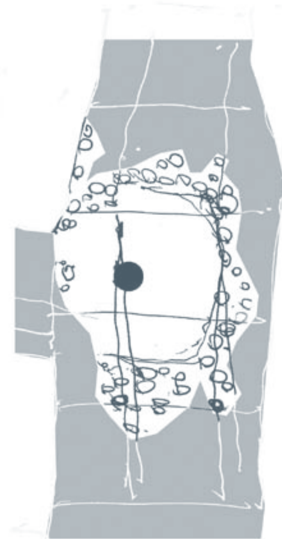
The narrow width of the street lends itself to performance in the round only at the top, southern end where crowds may reach 400 persons.

15h30 The limbo dancers work the crowd. A party is in full swing at the top of Grafton St. Not much space remains for passers by.

15h45 A Christian Rock band tried to claim the pitch after the end of the limbo performance. The crowd heads off leaving no evidence of the previous gathering.

Stage1 Jazz Duo set up between two bollards. Five spectators form the audience. Anumber of couples hover by walls and street furniture in passive participation.

Stage2 About 30 people form a core group around Pigman. Flow moves towards the junction separating groups of spectators at the back. A number of other couples observe from a distance clinging to street furniture and adjacent buildings.



Stage3 About 150 people observe Bendy Emma in action. Passage is afforded along only one side of the street. It is no longer possible to watch from a distance and people must join the main crowd to see the act.

1. Bendy Emma sets up at the junction of Chatham St. and Grafton St. At 7pm the junction offers a remaing spot on the street at which to enjoy the sunshine.

2. A rope defines the performance area. It also creates the crowd form.

3. During the performance the crowd grows to such an extent that only one side of the street remains passable.

Weather

The area was modelled in *Ecotect* and sunlight patterns studied. Except for the top of Grafton St. the most prized pitches did not correspond to the sunniest locations. With performances generally of 3-4 minutes duration, temperatures of 10 degrees are tolerable. Ben Kritikos mentioned that in poor weather, busking can be lucrative, with money given out of sympathy. Large crowds were noted on the street despite overcast conditions. The likelihood of rain enhances the need for light, portable equipment. The many porches on the street offer shelter, to wait off a downpour.

Conclusion

While this study focused exclusively on Grafton Street, the city's other main commercial street – Henry Street has a similar level of activity yet does not sustain buskers during day-time. A comparison between the two would further highlight the urban qualities that encourage outdoor performance.

Observing these performances one sees how little material is necessary for their staging. It is striking to watch a theatre for 400 people being built by a single performer, a rope and a box and then to observe it clearing without a trace in four minutes time. It is all about the creation of a place for encounter.

Daniel Ryan studied architecture in UCD, worked for Solearth Ecological Architecture 2003-2007 and is currently doing a Masters in Sustainable Design at the University of Sydney.

With thanks to Emma Tunbridge, JJ Tierney, Ben Kritikos & Aidan Gorman. **i.** It is interesting to consider that while average rents in spring 2006 for the first six metre's depth for shops on the street was 8,610/m^2 (http://www.hok.ie/pdfs/property_outlook/93.pdf), there are no overheads for street performance. Buskers are unlicensed with no system other than a musician's union card for registration. According to guitarist Ben Kritikos, earnings for a Saturday night from midnight to 5am would typically be €100-€150. "Some people look at us as street artists but others think we're beggars." This contrast is borne out in the use of images of buskers to advertise the buzz of the city abroad while these performances are allowed at the discretion of the Gardaí. **ii.** CB Richard Ellis Irish Retail Market View Q3 2006, http://www.cbre.com/NR/rdonlyres/E764B036-A80C-45B4-89AF-4BBB2E6287D1/426184/IrishRetailMarketViewQ32006.pdf. Accessed 20/12/06 **iii.** In an interview with J.J. Tierney (Pigman), July 2006 **iv.** 'The bollards that are found in many southern European city squares function widely as such well-defined supports for longer stays. These are used to stand against, to stand near, to play around, and to put things next to' p 153 Jan Gehl, *Life Between Buildings: Using Public Space*, Arkitektens Forlag (4th Ed. 2001)

11

Something Out of Nothing

KAETHE BURT-O'DEA

IT HAS BEEN SAID that removing the walls between terraced houses and replacing them with compost bins could cause a social revolution. A year ago in May 2005 we decided to test the theory. We cleared a desolate scrap of railed-in ground at the southern corner of Sitric Road and placed two composting bins on it. The idea was that we would grow only food. Everyone has an interest in food and so there is an abundance of subject matter in it. We hoped that the corner site would encourage conversation. Limiting ourselves to using what was there (nothing), our kitchen waste, and anything anyone wanted to give us, we started our experiment. I had a wormery full of compost, the Phoenix Park provided leaf mould, members of Leinster Freecycle happened to be offering topsoil and a local rabbit breeder began giving us his manure rather than putting it out to landfill. Over the course of a few days what had been waste was instantly converted into valuable building material while anonymous people, whom we had previously passed on the street, became instead neighbours.

What we were doing was mysterious, but there was entertainment value in it, and it also made sense. Why not use these things as communities had before? People began to stop, ask questions, and tell us stories about how waste had been used productively in the past within families or by local characters that happily collected it by horse and cart. Anonymous gifts appeared - plants, tools, a watering can, and a notice board.

We are often asked how we share the minimal amount of food we produce with all who have contributed. In fact this has never posed a problem. When people pass and stop to comment we offer them a courgette, a handful of beans, or a tomato. There are no entitlements here. We are growing a limited amount of beautiful vegetables, but the significant aspect of the harvest has been the enormous amount of goodwill and community cohesion this simple project has generated within our neighbourhood amongst residents of every age and description who now have an interest in common. As this began to grow we decided to write a proposal to develop the corner into a composting information centre for the neighbourhood and were awarded a conservation grant by Vodafone.

We decided to celebrate! The poster for last October's *Sitric Salad* harvest festival displays an exotic selection of intensely flavoured organic vegetables nurtured by the heat radiating from Sitric's end of terrace south-facing brick wall. Over 100 people came that day to share our home-grown feast. A DJ set up his decks, someone brought out a couch, chairs appeared, children began to draw pictures with chalk on the street, a fire juggler appeared at dark, and a local photographer captured it all on camera.

Every day when we are out scratching around in the earth we meet someone new from the area that wants to join us, and last autumn a neighbour donated another adjacent piece of ground for cultivation. In early spring we spread it with the compost we had accumulated over the year both amongst ourselves and vicariously from secret donors. A gathering of neighbours (local children, a chef, architects, a planner, community workers, a coordinator of environmental NGOs, a TD etc.) arrived to contribute a pot luck lunch and help plant a pear tree, three apple trees, raspberries, and blackcurrants. We warmed our hands against the wood fire burning in a recycled washing-machine drum.

The rotting pumpkins that had spread their illuminated grins at us from inside the railings at Halloween were tossed onto the ground contributing additional nutrients. When the summer sun warmed the new garden their seeds sprouted, spontaneously providing a source for this coming Halloween's jack-o-lanterns. We held the Sitric Picnic, our second street party, on June 11th. This time over 200 people were attracted to our small green patch, lingering well into the candlelit evening while we projected a film onto the Lilliput Press Building opposite.

If such a minimal act of urban reclamation can ignite a tipping point in community activity there must be a deep and intrinsic hunger that this project is satisfying. In the urban context we have lost touch with where our food comes from and where our waste goes. In many ways we live in a state of remove from the most basic needs in life: food, community, touch, and the creative use of raw materials. This project has connected us with all of these and is generating a local society where anyone can find a place.

Over the 18 years I have lived in this neighbourhood, I have seen many people come and go. They are always sorry to leave the snug community and the solid warmth of its intimate rows of two up and two down houses. The motivation for leaving is most often the lack of outdoor space limited to a cramped cement yard. I had always felt the same, but had never had the resources to leave. Only recently I was reminded of this again when interviewed about our project. I was asked if I would prefer to have my own piece of land to tend in privacy as I wished. Suddenly the importance of cultivating vegetables on this busy public corner became infinitely clear to me.

The *Sitric Community Composting Garden* provides a grassroots laboratory where we can study, on a societal level, the same issues I am exploring in my professional research into the design of healthcare buildings. The multi-sensorial experience of natural environments and, more precisely, an 'active' relationship within them, is now seen

to be a vital element in the promotion of psychological, physical and sociological health,[i] enhanced creativity, discriminative learning,[ii] higher levels of community participation, and lower levels of civil disobedience.[iii] In four hundred generations, we have progressed from life as hunter-gatherers to a global society of urban dwellers. Though cities have existed for two hundred generations, only within the last fifteen have more than a small proportion of the world's population lived in them.

Andre Viljoen's recent book, *CPULs: Continuous Productive Urban Landscapes* (Viljoen, 2005) discusses the multi-faceted sustainable development that could be accomplished by re-establishing our involvement in natural systems. He argues for the introduction of fertile, agriculturally productive corridors as an essential element in urban infrastructure. Case studies document this development in Cuba as an emergency measure with surprising success. His model integrates food production with lifestyle amenities (sports facilities, bike routes, farmers' markets, cafes etc.) and promises a win-win solution. The accuracy of his vision is confirmed by the longstanding community garden movement in France where city councils rent land to residents for reasonable rates under the condition that they maintain conscientious cultivation of the plot. The most formidable example of this is the Ivry citadel in Paris, started in 1907 which contains 248 irregularly shaped gardens that average 250 square metres in size:

Municipal aid is a must. But this is no longer in any sense philanthropic, for the Federations' gardens offer many advantages to the townships, which help support them. Allotment gardens can be situated on land otherwise left fallow and unfit for construction – along rivers, for example, where flooding may occur. Vegetable gardening, it is claimed, may even help reduce river pollution. The average cost of laying out and equipping such plots is only one fifth that of any ordinary city park for the same area. And these kitchen garden belts can be integrated into public spaces, with playgrounds, nature and jogging trails, and more conventional parkland around them. (Jones 1997)

Though these allotments were originally set up to support immigrant families new to the city environment, the benefits of therapeutic horticulture have been widely documented in projects around the world. In the garden everyone (including the unemployed, mentally or physically disabled, psycho-geriatric patients with Alzheimer's and dementia, drug addicts, delinquent children, etc.), can find in addition to an occupation, social exchange and relief from stress. Based on this evidence a range of progressive research projects are experimenting with ecological design concepts that promise to link us back into natural systems while maintaining the cultural advantages of the urban context.

In relation to the limited ground on which it sits, the *Sitric Community Composting Garden* represents a micro experiment into what promises to be a significant urban movement. One year on, the project is gathering its own momentum. Fifty percent of domestic household waste is compostable. Who knows what can be accomplished through the creative use of the organic output from a terrace of 60 houses? At worst we will prepare our neighbourhood for the incoming EU directive that will make the separate collection and use of organic waste mandatory. At best we will inspire new thinking around the design of urban communities. We are not alone - our project is mirrored by other groups sprouting up around Dublin, including the *Dolphin's Barn Community Garden* who, sadly, recently lost their site on the canal. As an 'action' research network we are involved in a collaborative study documenting the relationship between food, waste,corners, isolation, common ground, and productive urban space, while we cultivate community (and a few vegetables) on the corner of our street.

Kaethe Burt-O'Dea is working as an independent researcher and consultant from Dublin. She is currently funded by Arup to undertake research at MARU, the Medical Architecture Research Group at London South Bank University. She also works in collaboration with Usable Buildings Trust, UK, as their healthcare focus group leader, and is currently doing a Masters in Sustainable Design at the University of Sydney.

i. Ulrich 1984, Semi, Aldridge, Becker 2003 **ii.** Ibsen 1990, Ibsen et al 1987, Mitchell 1989, Clark and Watson 1988, as in Heerwagen 1999 **iii.** Sather 2001

12

Charleston House: the last community in Dublin flatland

MAURIZIO SCALERA

Architecture and by extension, urban design, has always been in some way the physical manifestation of the people's will. There is a direct (albeit ambivalent) relationship between the ideology, the organization and the aspirations of a society on the one hand and the built environment on the other. A 'Collective Utopia'[i], generally coming from either a religious, political or economical source, tends to express itself in the tangible structures of a society.

Previously in the past a distinction could be made between *architecture* as the direct product of power (conducted through individuals) and the *city* as the 'human space' created within the interstices of this power's concrete shell[ii]. However in the last century, this distinction became more abstract and complex, as power, blurred behind layers of hierarchy, became less and less identifiable. With the common man in the street ostensibly representing both 'the people' and 'the power', it is difficult to pin unequivocal responsibility on an individual for a particular course of events. Inertia has become the ultimate engine of progress and today we design and build for this common man and the narrow middle section of the human spectrum that he represents. This fictional person has come to dictate the evolution of cities [iii].

Is it possible to reconcile such a figure with ideas about 'community' when, in its original meaning, community denoted a group of different individuals sharing the same principles and goals?[iv] .

Can architecture be involved in the creation of relationships - preparing the ground for the interaction of the inhabitants and generating a sense of belonging - when it is designed for the statistically average citizen?
Or should architecture instead be conceived as an 'open source' framework, the hardware which is later fulfilled by the software?
Is an architecture which encourages the creation of 'human space' achievable within today's power structures?
If a spirit of community is dependent on shared goals might it be best engendered through a spontaneous reaction to non-standard circumstances?
Do accepted standards act against the formation of community?
With western citizens seemingly enjoying ever-increasing levels of personal comfort, wealth, freedom and security, is the sense of belonging to a group inevitably weakened?
Why should such people need a group?

The above questions were raised by the experience of living in Charleston House. Devoid of a management company, offering failing, archaic conveniences and a lack of hermetic privacy, it was typical of the obsolete and problematic sub-divided Georgian House in Dublin. But, full of 'character' - provided above all by the quality of light, views and space - it offered a fertile ground for the generation of a spontaneous spirit of community...

Maurizio Scalera is an Italian architect living and working in Ireland since 2002

i. See: *Project on the City 1 - Great Leap Forward*, edited by Chuihua Judy Chung, Jeffrey Inaba, Rem Koolhaas, Sze Tsung Leong - Harvard Design School, 2001: IDEOLOGY-RED, essay by Mihai Craciun, pp.47-52. **ii.** See: "Volume", *Archis* vol.20, # 5 and # 6, a project by Archis + AMO + C-LAB, 2006, The Netherlands. **iii.** See: 'The Average Citizen - A socio-political experiment that aims to change society in accordance with the opinions of a statistically average citizen' by Mans Wrange in collaboration with Igor Isaksson & the average citizen lobbying group(1999-2009), in Archis # 1, "The People", 2003, Amsterdam. **iv.** The word "community" from Latin *communitas*, has the same etymology of 'communicate' from Latin communicare = to share, from communis. **v.** Deirdre Fein: '*Four Roads to Dublin - the History of Ranelagh, Rathmines and Leeson Street*', the O'Brien press, Dublin, 1995, p. 215. **vi.** Constantina Maxwell: '*Dublin under the Georges 1714-1830*', Gill & Macmillan, Dublin,1979, pp. 95-96, Douglas Bennett: *'Encyclopaedia of Dublin'*, Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1991, pp. 168, Maurice Craig: *'Dublin 1660-1860: a Social and Architectural History*', Allen Figgis, Dublin, 1969, pp.192-193. **vii.** Ibid **viii.** Deirdre Fein op.cit. p. 215. **ix**. An advertisement in the *Irish Times* about the auction of Charleston House on the 17th of July 1979 says: "Very suitable home and income. Generous car parking in forecourt. In 6 s/c flats. Pre '63 conversion. It needs repair and decoration. Vacant possession. Great potential in this premiere letting area. View Today 3 - 4.30 p.m. Solicitor: R. T. Ringrose, 3 Chancery place, Dublin 7". **x**. Deirdre Fein op.cit. p. 218, Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia - Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. **xi**. Deirdre Fein op.cit. p. 218.

Photomontage by M. Scalera
Photograph of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in process of conversion into offices, nave looking towards the entrance.
From the National Trust Archive, photo by Geoff White, 1980.

"The North side of the [Charleston] road was built first in the late 1850's apart from the nos. 1 and 2, which can be seen on the 1837 OS map."[v]

Side and rear external stone walls and cast iron fire stairs.

The building first appears on the Ordnance Survey map, six inch scale, Dublin sheet 18, 1876-revision (from the 1844 survey).

In 1690, Lord Ranelagh (whose family was called Jones and originally was from Ranelagh Co. Wicklow),Paymaster General of the Forces, moved to London and built a house east of Chelsea Hospital. After his death a syndicate bought his property and opened the fashionable Ranelagh pleasure gardens, in which William Jones designed a Rotunda.[vi]

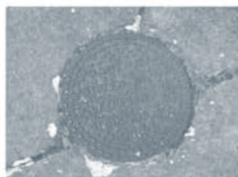
In 1766-68 a member of the Hollister family, who built and tuned church organs, converted Willbrook mansion, near Cullenswood, which formerly belonged to William Barnard, Bishop of Raphoe and Derry, in to pleasure gardens after the ones in London: eventually the entire area became known as Ranelagh.[vii]

CHARLESTON ROAD: "In the early part of 19th century the area from Wellington House (now no. 7 Oakley Road) to Charleston Avenue was covered by the Wellington orchards. (...) Though there is no road marked on the 1849 OS map, it must have been commenced about this time, as by 1956 a new road (...) is recorded to be finished."[viii]

Slim cross section, high ceilings, large windows, classical proportions.

(Mature) Georgian style ornaments, derived from Palladian Architecture.

Wrought iron railings, from Tonge & Taggart foundry at 41 Bishop Street, South Dublin.



Light grey granite, probably from the quarry at Dalkey , also used for the construction of Dun Laoghaire harbour (1817-1859).

S.Teresa of Avila (1515 - 1582)*

* Did it belong to J.J.McCarthy?

Charleston House

Single aspect, 1 bed apart. South facing.

Double aspect, 2 bed apart.

Double aspect, 2 bed apart.

Single aspect, 1 bed apart. North facing (at the back)

Double aspect, 2 bed apart.

Entrance hall

Double aspect, 3 bed apart. own door

Double aspect, 3 bed apart. own door

'funky' 1950's interior refurbishment, highlighted by cadmium-lemon yellow doors and glass brick partitions

Obsolete features in the main entrance hall

Pre '63 conversion. The building was subdivided into six apartments until 1979, when the East one at first floor level was further divided into two single bed units.[ix]

Generous gravelled front garden, surrounded by mature trees: 2 horse chestnuts, 3 laurels, 1 maple, 1 laburnum, 1 rowan and 1 oak.

The unusual pistachio "bugnato" podium and the two flights of steps, sweeping around two bulky pillars topped with lanterns, are reminiscent of a seashore setting.

James Joseph McCarthy (1817-1882), architect, the "Irish Pugin", leader in the Gothic and Romanesque style revival, designer of many city churches including St. Saviour's in Dominick street, Our Lady Star of the sea in Sandymount and St. Catherine's in Meath Street, founder of the Irish Ecclesiological Society in 1849, lived here in the 1860's.[x]

James Lambert, who built extensively in Rathmines and was Lord Mayor of Dublin in 1859, also lived here[xi]

Front space used for sunbathing (very rarely), parking and barbecues

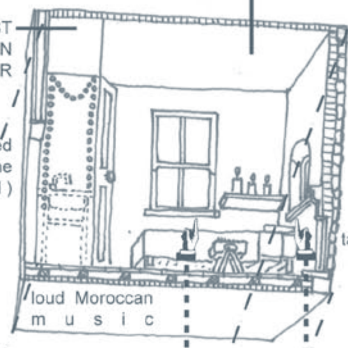
view to the South (winter)

(summer)

Photo by B. Alessi

view to the North

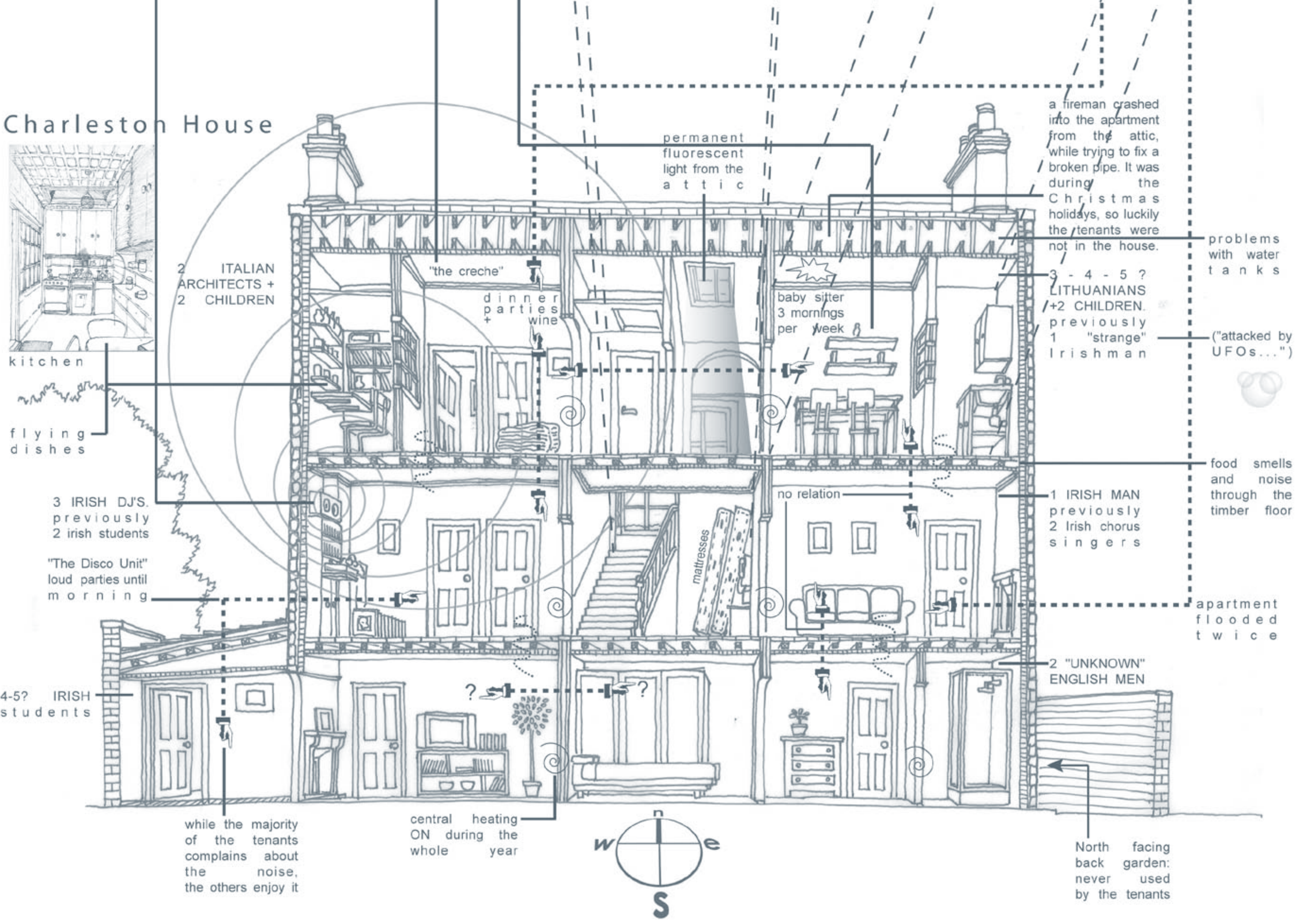
Mary Immaculate refugee of Sinners (Patrick Byrne - 1854) in Rathmines



24/7 down beat sound system.

Photo by B. Alessi

kids storm the building


Charleston House
kitchen
flying dishes
2 ITALIAN ARCHITECTS + 2 CHILDREN
"the creche"
dinner parties + wine
permanent fluorescent light from the attic
baby sitter 3 mornings per week
a fireman crashed into the apartment from the attic, while trying to fix a broken pipe. It was during the Christmas holidays, so luckily the tenants were not in the house.
problems with water tanks
3 - 4 - 5 ? LITHUANIANS +2 CHILDREN. previously 1 "strange" Irishman
("attacked by UFOs...")
3 IRISH DJ'S. previously 2 irish students
"The Disco Unit" loud parties until morning
no relation
mattresses
food smells and noise through the timber floor
1 IRISH MAN previously 2 Irish chorus singers
apartment flooded twice
2 "UNKNOWN" ENGLISH MEN
4-5? IRISH students
while the majority of the tenants complains about the noise, the others enjoy it
central heating ON during the whole year
n
w
e
S
North facing back garden: never used by the tenants

13

Design as Translation and Typicality: On Autonomy and Contingency in Architecture

PATRICK LYNCH

Built upon love, architecture engages the inhabitant as true participant, unlike the remote spectator of the modernist work of art or the consumer of fashionable buildings-cum-images. If this engagement is not obvious, it is partly because architectural meaning has been "explained" through a deceptively simple assumption that confuses our human quest for happiness with hedonism. Love, in its multiple incarnations as desire, is as open-ended as life itself and remains the ground of meaning even in times of obsessive materialism.
Alberto Pérez-Gómez

I want to discuss the vexed notions of participation and community in a way that addresses the central questions that these terms disguise and corrupt, viz. the problem of creativity in architecture, and the difficulty of communicating meaning in what we do. Since I am writing as a half-educated enthusiast, paddling in the foreign waters of philosophy and poetry, these thoughts are framed in two rather strict and didactic oppositions. Part of the energy that drives this essay is the desire to clarify and to unify the identity and difference of things; much like the effort of drawing and working on a design, exaggerated parameters and hubristic rhetorical rules are employed in order to structure an enquiry.

Autonomy

No block of marble but it does not hide
The concept living in the artists' mind –
Pursuing it inside that form, he'll guide
His hand to shape what reason has defined.

Only fire forges iron
Michelangelo

Traditional theories of architectural practice, from Vitruvius to Alberti, situate knowledge of techniques of construction within the tradition of cultural representation. In other words, architecture is an art precisely because it is the transformation of technique into a form of ethical practice. As we all know, this doesn't sound easy and it's not. The possibility of the transformative power of design is the capacity of an architect to translate the desires and wishes of others into a personal vision of change. Although not immediately available to language, architectural ideas are similar to other artistic constructions in that each is striving to communicate something. This may be more or less abstract or grounded in what is common.

John Sallis claims that 'still, even today, if one would know what stone is, the most propitious way would be to recall the temple, to bring oneself before its ancient stones, to let their silence resound' *(Stone)*. The autonomous aspects of architecture relate proportion, size, shape, and form together in harmonious expression of the potential of fabrication to reveal the latent beauty within things. Architecture is the articulation of mute matter, not just as metaphor, but as fact. Matter of fact qualities are such that wood will bend, concrete can be poured, glass is floated, bricks combine, steel is stiffened, stone is heavy but brittle, plastics thin but strong; and that materials can inspire form. Architects have specialist knowledge of the properties of things as well as the capacity to locate this information in the space of culture.

Locating ideas in a place reveals the universal aspects of human experience, e.g. knowledge of bodily orientation, solar orientation, topographic conditions, weather, the seasons, etc. Conversely, knowledge of particular properties of a material for example, intimates the latent expressive quality of this material. The autonomy of an architect is specialist knowledge of what is common, a particular sense of appropriateness (decorum). In which case, the seemingly autonomous aspects of construction – the quantities of things – cannot be divorced from the qualitative associations from which we derive pleasure. Just as vernacular construction is at once local and representational, shelter and ornament, identity and habit, architectural autonomy is dependent upon the efficacy of someone's imagination and their ability to communicate this in words and images.

Myths of the architect as objective and/or subjective ignore the creative process of design, the inevitably dialogical structure of drawing out ideas from our memory and revising preconceptions in light of new insights. Designing tunes training, temperament, insight and inspiration. These diverse human attributes can be fused in architectural thinking in drawing and model making. Architects are involved in the making of things and in predicting how these artefacts will be used. This is not a precise art and a certain amount of guesswork is combined with reflection and experience of other people, and self-knowledge based upon experience as much as heuristic knowledge. Perhaps this is why it takes so long to do

architecture? Seeking to overcome the difficulty of learning to speak architecture by working through theories that are autonomous from human situations, is as foolish as asking someone else to undertake the design process for you. There is nothing artificial about intelligence.

As a situated and cultural construct, architectural autonomy might be recast as typicality. Since something typical is dependent upon situations that reoccur in various places, it involves at once local and global knowledge, and is more like a language than a theory. We say that you can speak in 'the vernacular' for good reasons. Typicality in architecture suggests that creativity resides less in striving for originality or uniqueness, but rather, in the capacity to interpret the appetites and needs of others in a way that does not limit the life of a building to its inhabitants. It implies the ability to speak in tongues, possession of a musical ear along with the ability to say something well. Architecture has always been considered more closely related to rhetoric than logic. Perhaps it is the structural nature of languages that most closely resembles the construction of architectural images, and which enable us to talk about the power of memory to structure our spaces. This embodied and temporal art makes discussions in the abstract about the structure of language – and especially architectural language, so tedious and ultimately pointless. Like language, architecture enables us to say the same thing in endless variations.

Contingency

My architecture does not have a pre-established language nor does it establish a language. It is a response to a concrete problem, a situation in transformation in which participate.
Alvaro Siza

Interpretation succeeds in evoking a response, both to our experience of an artwork and to the situations of life; to ideas and the world. Martin Heidegger compared the creative act of thinking to a 'Holzweg', to walking in a forest, along a constantly appearing and disappearing and reappearing path – getting lost in order to re-cover old ground. The courage to pursue and to abandon false paths is the crucial aspect of the creative process, which makes architecture an art. Without this playful aspect we are merely seeking solutions or statements of personal intent. Whereas game playing like speech, requires and demonstrates trust. Translation is the task of rendering anew what has already been said by another. Its etymology is from Latin and *Translere* means to carry over, to support and to bear. Translation, as a metaphor for creativity, is completed by another. The move from one person's singular experience to the potential community implied by communication requires a space of interpretation. This space is the realm of participation, which makes art available to us at different rates; not all pictures appear at the same rate, films can haunt us and poems require particular efforts of perception and imaginative interpretation. Architecture can be seen as the translation of one person's desires into an explicit open field of possibilities. As a person enters a room they join in the task of the creative construction of a place.

The impulse towards creativity in language and the plastic arts is a drive to make distinct and different each experience and one place from another. Conversely, artistic 'resonance' evokes what is common within a singular expression of experience. Like translation, creativity is powerfully empathetic and an expression of a sympathetic drive towards encountering 'the other'. Empathy is the basis of creativity understood as interpretation rather than originality. Empathy is fellow feeling and is the proto-form of friendship. For the ancients, the point of knowledge was to orient us within the public realm. Hans-Georg Gadamer tells us in *Truth and Method* that much worry arose from the distinction made in modern German between experience understood as '*Erlebnis*', personal, non-symbolic, non-redeemable-subjective; and '*Erfahrung*', common knowledge, mature reflection, common sense-evocative. Experience is a spontaneous ordering of events as a structure that reveals the personal to be common. Repetitive acts reveal a world of commonplace truths to us, and dwelling, like any creative act seeks balance through repetition. Repetition of care, ie. the repair and renewal of the things in the world that we tend makes architecture. Siza declares that dwelling is an ongoing 'matter of heroism'. He poses the question, do we own a house or does it command us? And more generally, are we having experiences or are they happening to us?

In his essay *Who am I and who are you?* Gadamer writes: 'one of the fundamental metaphors of the modern age is the poet's activity as a paradigm for human existence itself. The right word, immortalized by the poet, is not his special artistic achievement, but more generally, a symbol of the possibilities of human experience, one that permits

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the reader to be the I, that is, the poet… If the poets' verses make this commonality concrete, then each of us occupies precisely the position, which the poet claims as his own. Who am I and who are you? The poem provides its own answer to this question by keeping it open.' Reading is a form of translation of one person's words into those we share in common. Paradoxically, they became uniquely ours when we understand them and make them our own. As an example of the phenomena of translation Gadamer advises us:

in every discussion about possible interpretations one must try out the opinion of others if one is ultimately to hear what is there in the text, the irrefutable witness.

Perhaps for an architect the act of translating another's desires puts a particular burden upon us. We can only ever refer to an un-built thing, and do so at the risk of ridicule and the accusation of arrogance. Our imagination remains our irrefutable witness however incomplete and partial. *In The Deptford Trilogy* by Roberston Davies an actor-director recounts how the *Egotist* thinks everything they do is right; they are almost autistic in their claims for the autonomy of their actions. An egoist on the other hand stands for the values of their art, believing their work to represent a continuity of traditions, which require careful re-presentation, reconstruction and renewal. In Davies' formulation, egoism, unlike *egotism*, is not autonomous – it is the animate passion of praxis. Similarly, the irrefutable witness lies within us, but it is located and can be found in certain places and in particular experiences, somewhere in the world.

Deep
in the time-cleft
beside honeycomb
bees-wax ice,
waits your breath-crystal,
the irrefutable
witness.

(from Atemkristall 1967, by Paul Celan,
trans. Patrick Lynch 2002)

Patrick Lynch is a director of Lynch architects in London, alongside his wife Claudia. He studied architecture at Liverpool University and took a Master of Philosophy degree in The History and Philosophy of Architecture at Cambridge University, where he was supervised by Dalibor Vesely. He has taught design units at Kingston University and The Architectural Association, and currently Lynch architects run a design studio at London Metropolitan University. Lynch architects won the Young Architect of The Year Award 2005.

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Paulo Mendes da Rocha – 'What do the others think?'

MIRIAM DUNN

The following is the second of a two-part interview with Paulo Mendes da Rocha in his office in the centre of Sao Paulo. See *building material* 15 for part 1.

What does it mean for you to build in Brazil? In such a divided society?

Poverty is often the enemy of architecture, making it difficult sometimes to work in Brazil. But poverty can also be construed as architecture's best friend. For instance, the poorest, most humiliated people of our society - the homeless - are wonderful builders. Some see the *Favelas* as the most profound expression of urbanism in Brazil because they embody a deep desire to inhabit the city. This desire can create wonderful works of architecture.

For instance, there is a well known fridge manufacturer in Brazil called *Consul* who emblazon their symbol, a golden crown, on the door of each fridge. When I visited Rio, a student brought me to see a house in the *Favelas* in which an old woman had used a *Consul* fridge door as the main entrance. You enter her residence as if stepping into a submarine. The steel door is red with a golden crown and her house - which is the most desirable one in Rio - is a palace looking down on Guanabara Bay. You could say that the two most beautiful houses in Brazil are this one and the Copan Building by Niemeyer in São Paulo. Both houses use technology to surprise life and reveal its secrets.

The old lady's use of the fridge door is an example of a product of technology being used to benefit society, but it must be remembered that technology can also be used to construct such things as bombs. This is an idea explored in Durrenmatt's play, *The Physicists*, in which a group of famous scientists, such as Galileo and Einstein, meet in a lunatic asylum. They are all disillusioned with the political establishment's use of their work and one can easily imagine a similar sentiment in a play about architects. For instance if Palladio, Mies and Niemeyer met they could have a very similar conversation.

What then is the architect's role amidst the hunger and poverty of the slums?

The misery of the third world today is compounded by the fact that, with all our resources, hunger should no longer exist. Unfortunately this is beyond the remit of architecture - it cannot solve this kind of problem. While it has consequences which it must face up to, they are all it has to deal with.

But even if architecture cannot solve such problems, surely architects themselves have the power to tackle them?

Architects should work towards a future in which life is led in an exemplary way in an exemplary place. We cannot simply abandon the Earth once we make a mess of it because such an action would render us unwelcome out there in the universe! This brings us back to our earlier discussion about ecology and common sense but in particular to the issue of desire *(see building material 15).*

If we recognize the importance of desire we can see that the key to the contemporary city is the machine because it is this which fulfills our existing desires while simultaneously making new ones possible. The satisfaction of one desire generates another. It is critical to understand this paradox, because we must not allow desire to become destructive.

Do you know who thought a lot about this question of desire? Shakespeare. I think he is important for architects for two reasons. Firstly because we are in the business of using our knowledge to fulfill desires and we should therefore understand them. But we could also learn from the way in which Shakespeare used his art, not for it's own sake, but in order to address wider issues. Of course if architecture was to do so, it would have to enter into a dialogue with the public - which brings us to the question of how an architect would say something. Not what, but how!

Could you tell us about your own projects on these terms?

Assuming you know what you want to say, each project becomes an opportunity to say it. If we were to take one example, a museum for instance, the question would be: 'how do I use the brief of a museum to enter into dialogue with people?' Designing a museum is easy in itself - there are examples in books to which you can refer if you want to see what not to do! But to approach the project in this way would be to waste the opportunity that is being presented to you. An opportunity to speak.

For dialogue to occur the architect must use down-to-earth terms that can be understood. For example in the Museum for Sculpture (MUBE, Sao Paulo), I began the conversation with a grand accessible gesture - an open-air exhibition space - much like an author attempting to grab the attention of his readers right from the start. An author doesn't want the public losing interest 30 pages into a 300 page book and an architect must think about his/her building in

a similar manner.

The approach to MUBE creates a great moment...

Because it is based on common sense! We were presented with a site of 7000 square metres and all I knew for sure was what I didn't want to do - put the building in the middle and end up with a front garden, a back garden and an inconsequential slice of ground on each side. I began to think about the 4 metre drop in level across the site. It occurred to me that the most emphatic architectural statement would be to bury the whole museum, allowing me to use the sheer size of the site to speak to the public.

I knew immediately that this was the correct strategy, but inherent to it was a huge problem - no one would see the museum! I needed a sign, an external gesture, but this would have to be carefully handled as it could easily be a disaster. Again you have to rely on your common sense and attempt to visualize what would be acceptable to people. The gesture had to work in terms of function of course, but it also had to work in terms of the public's imagination and their familiarity with buildings. Would a band stand work? A loggia? A canopy? Or was it possible to have them all? I decided to make it the size of a small house as this was a scale understood by all and it would provide a reference for anything that was placed beside it. It would be a scale rule.

The issue of scale can be very important in how a building relates to the surrounding landscape.

Yes, and when you're dealing with this relationship remember that the imagination is not afraid of apparently absurd comparisons. For instance the Museum of Modern Art (by Alfonso Reidy) in Rio de Janeiro creates a relationship between a little stone sculpture and the Sugar Loaf Mountain in the background. It makes the mind boggle.

Our strategy of burying the museum set up similar relationships, and on a more prosaic level we also knew it would work well in terms of providing sound and thermal insulation. But we still needed to provide this much storage and that many staircases etc. I used a span of 20m so that we could create any size space that the museum would require - 20m x 80m, 20m x 100m etc. Having set up parallel walls at this interval, the rest began to fall into place.

One could almost sit back and talk about it while other people drew it up, but it's important to realise that the power of a lot of art lies in how the original concept is carried out. For instance, Magritte's picture in which a huge stone is just about to hit the ground attains its potency from the fact that is a still life of a moving object, painted incredibly realistically.

Like the beam of the MUBE?

Exactly. Like Magritte's painting, it raises questions about the instability of nature - where did that meteor come from? It opens a conversation with us.

And if Magritte's stone demonstrates the possibilities of painting, then the beam is a demonstration of the possibilities of construction. That is its beauty. All the arts are seductive because in their own way they create possibilities - for instance the possibility of attaining the unspeakable - which is why those who are conservative in their politics are against art.

Of course, the beauty of art also lies in the way that it can say a lot of things at the same time, like Magritte's painting. It invites interpretation, indeed it requires interpretation....

But how do you yourself view the results of your work?

There was a cook in my grandmother's house, which was an extremely busy house, as my mother had eight daughters and there were always suitors visiting! After the cook had prepared and served the meals she would come out to the dining room and stand there, arms crossed, appreciating the enjoyment her creation was providing. And that is what I do. I am not comparing myself to her though, as this is something that everyone does. It is part of the human condition that we need to see what the others think.

This interview was recorded on DVD in Sao Paulo, 26th August 2005. Supported by the Arts Council. Translation by Marta Moriera (São Paulo), Tiago Faria and Nelson Faustino Carvalho, (Dublin).

Paulo Mendes da Rocha belongs to the last generation of Modernist architects. Born in Vitoria, 1928, and educated in São Paulo, he is one of the key architects in the so-called 'Paulista School' centered in São Paulo. He is Professor at the Faculty of Architecture, São Paulo. His work is preoccupied with the monumentality of structure combined with a weightless quality, exemplified by such projects as the Contemporary Sculpture Museum of São Paulo, MuBE and the Chapel of São Pedro. In 2006, Paulo Mendes da Rocha was recently awarded the Pritzker Prize for Architecture.

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At Home in the City

STEPHEN MULHALL

Introduction

In his *Glasgow Sonnets,* Edwin Morgan, chronicler of the changing physical and social fabric of his native city, writes of 'hope deferred' for the common citizen[i]. Throughout the years of poverty and upheaval and the endless twentieth century cycle of clearance, redevelopment and rehabilitation the promise was always of changed environments and changed lives. More often than not these new physical and social manifestations were as problematic as those they replaced and the role of the citizen remained one of forced passivity.

This article will attempt to place 'At Home in the City', a competition-based social housing project, in the context of both the city of Glasgow and the area of Gallowgate in which it was situated. It also aims to reflect my personal experience of the project (initially as a student and later as an employee of the Glasgow Housing Association, GHA) and how this has influenced my thinking on housing and community involvement. 'At Home in the City' involved collaboration between tenants and students in an attempt to remedy a failed redevelopment typical of the kind Morgan charted. The article does not aim to document the history of social housing in Glasgow but does touch on many of the realities of tenant participation, tenant life and social housing design.

Social and Historical Context

The most conspicuous by-product of Glasgow's nineteenth century industrial boom was its working-class housing. The city's regular, open-ended, non-hierarchical grid reflected its mercantile economy and facilitated a tight urban fabric of row upon row of uniform – and sometimes stark – tenement blocks. Virtually all tenement stock was privately built and rented. Building mass was located along the perimeter edge of the city block; entrances were more or less directly off the street and semi-private courtyards (the 'back court') were sheltered from the public. Flats were centred around a common 'close' (internal stairwell) with two or more apartments located off each landing. The tenement's high density sustained community facilities; shops could, if necessary, be incorporated on the ground floor. Access off the street allowed interaction between people in the public arena and the tenement itself; the continuously enclosed streets and squares allowed for safe and defined spaces. The scale of the back court was proportional to the scale of the block, and landscaping was generally sufficient to define use and create a sense of ownership.

The responsibility for working class housing gradually transferred to local authorities in the early years of the twentieth century. The reasons were multiple: overcrowding and high densities, poverty and slum conditions, the rent strikes of the First World War, war damage, and the ideology of modernism with its strong social and moral ideas about the city. Traditional Glaswegian development principles had been based on incremental growth without much formal planning, as a result of largely speculative projects of local, individual investors in a free market economy. Now radical plans for transforming the city were proposed with competing ideologies of garden suburb, city in the sky and new town development. What they all had in common was their scale and ambition[ii]. The city eventually opted for a compromise: people were decanted to new towns, overspill peripheral estates were developed and the comprehensive, wholesale redevelopment of inner city slum areas such as Gallowgate was instigated.

As one of Glasgow's oldest and poorest areas Gallowgate contained some of the worst housing in the city with deficiencies in light, ventilation and sanitation. Redevelopment of the 12 hectare site began in the 1960s and almost the entire site was cleared. The redeveloped Gallowgate was radically different to what had gone before.

The two tallest residential tower blocks in the United Kingdom were erected[iii], complemented by a variety of lower-rise housing on the remainder of the site, including terraces of mono-pitched maisonettes and flats. Concern was expressed at the height of the two tower blocks at the time, but the prospect of new accommodation with indoor plumbing, generous space standards and even front and back gardens was generally welcomed.

The time-scale of neighbourhood decline was gradual. Problems began to appear with the building stock concurrent with an increase in social problems. Like many other estates of its era, Gallowgate's physical and social decline was embodied in drabness, vandalism and isolation. People gradually left the area and more and more 'good' families wanted out. Why did this occur?

Gallowgate's density had been radically lowered. The number of local shops and amenities dwindled and a site that had contained a 'steamie'[iv], a picture house and a dance hall now contained, apart from one small community facility, only housing. It contained much open and underdeveloped land; streets were no longer enclosed and the areas between free-standing buildings were neither

private nor public but 'lost spaces', impeding interaction between people in the street and those indoors. Movement through the site was sparse apart from match days at the nearby Parkhead football stadium, when fans from across the city would range across the site, exploiting its lack of physical boundaries and sometimes even treating parts as an outdoor urinal. The ambiguity of ownership in the external landscape hampered community policing and surveillance: cul-de-sacs without windows at ground floor level, open access balconies around the floors of the multi-storey blocks, a lack of defensible space. Roads were bollarded and the site was left with no lateral vehicular routes, increasing physical and social isolation. In later years people even used the internal closes as short cuts through the estate.

Gallowgate's large concentration of low-income households in a single tenure estate contributed to its process of 'ghetto-isation.' The area had always been notorious for fighting, drinking and crime, but the estate exposed tenants to these conditions on a much larger scale than ever before. Social and economic factors can sit uneasily in typical architectural discourse. What stands out in Gallowgate, however, is that the structures that facilitated social discipline – cleaning the tenement close or reprimanding misbehaving children – were eroded by both the new physical surroundings and a breakdown in the social fabric. This has been influenced by changing patterns of play and behaviour amongst the young and a decline in discipline from parents. Unsocial building design also broke down traditional forms of community and social interaction. The life of the street was sublimated by blank gable walls, dark underpasses and unsupervised open ground: arenas for anti-social behaviour. The tight – even cavernous – urban streets of four storey tenements that preceded the estate and the 'chatting out of a window' neighbourliness was gone.

Like many working class areas Gallowgate once had a close proximity of housing to industry, reflecting the preference of the workforce for housing within easy walking distance of their place of work – in the East End foundries, chemical works and brickworks. In common with other inner city areas Gallowgate lost skilled workers and viable businesses as a result of redevelopment and unemployment rose steadily as many of the remaining industries in the East End went into decline. Once residents saw smoke from the Parkhead Forge and the cranes of local scrap-metal merchants from their bedroom windows. A tenant tells of the precarious economic position today – a generation has become accustomed to unemployment; losing your job 'is you done for' – so different to her youth when 'you could leave a job one day and get another the next.'

In talking to tenants mention is often made of a bad family or 'a couple of bad apples' that led a close, street or whole neighbourhood in a downward spiral. Gallowgate seemed to lack the robustness – both physical and social – of what preceded it. I was told one story of tenants panicking when a neighbour was moving out, desperately trying to find out who was replacing them. This illustrates both the disproportionate effect a bad tenant can have and the lack of control felt by tenants. Management and maintenance of social housing and adequate community investment are vital. Has the radical change from private 'factors' to municipal landlords affected people's relationship with their built environment? Is a tenant more likely to respect the property of a private company rather than that of a municipal authority? Or is the problem with the very concept of social housing itself?

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Process

The aim of 'At Home in the City' was to create a master plan and strategy for Gallowgate and an integrated and sustainable design for housing. Begun in 2002, it involved students from the two schools of architecture in the city, as well as local and city social housing providers.[vi] The Gallowgate estate was chosen because it was a prime site in an area of massive social deprivation, and its housing stock was considered ready for redevelopment.

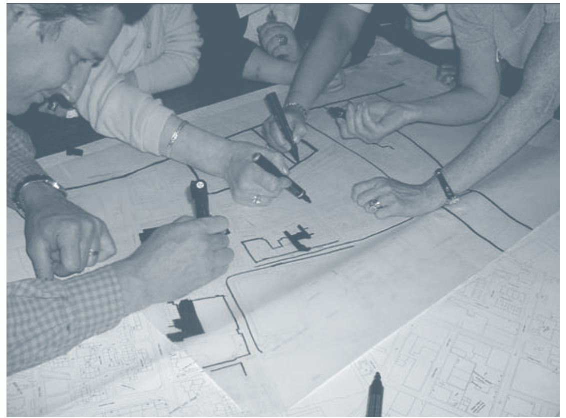
Tenant participation was key, with a highly committed core group involved from the outset. Training programmes were undertaken to raise awareness of good neighbourhoods and sustainable communities and to raise expectations and aspirations above the typical considerations of kitchens and bathrooms. Typically in consultation, the tenant is given no means to expand on their nascent but unarticulated desires and so these remain at the level of the lowest common denominator. Tenants were given both the skills and the space to explore issues such as community policing, public and private space, the space between buildings and the physical requirements of individual dwellings, in order to better understand their own environment and to illustrate some of its physical and social constraints. They were then able to address these issues with a number of schematic ideas for the site. As well as a competency for reading plans tenants were given both language and raised aspirations to take into the process.

A week-long master class brought students and tenants together. Beginning with a walking tour of the site and a city-wide bus tour, it exposed students, many of whom were new to the city, to some of the (sometimes shocking) realities of Glasgow's social housing. Schematic designs explored Gallowgate in city-wide, neighbourhood and building design contexts. An initial competition for ideas to raise aspirations about the project produced a diverse range of proposals from the students. Two stick in my mind as illustrative of a perhaps superficial comprehension of the estate and its reality: a cascade of paper aeroplanes covered with residents' wishes for the site launched from the site's two towers, and the painting of steel grilles on derelict properties in a range of bright colours.

True participation demands that the user should have the opportunity to transform the knowledge of the architect-designer, which can happen only if the architect recognises and respects the user's knowledge. This capacity is often grounded in everyday experience, and it is easy to dismiss it as having a lower status than specialised knowledge. Jeremy Till, in *The Negotiation of Hope*, quotes Sanoff, who tells us it is 'necessary to state the obvious and the commonplace in order to expand the narrowness of vision often found in highly trained people'[vii]. The master class brought into focus architecture's pursuit of aesthetics and techniques, the obscurity of its language and drawing codes and its remoteness from the needs and comprehension of everyday users[viii]. It was obvious that the barriers the profession surrounds itself with were rendering dialogue difficult. Furthermore, the socio-economic background of most students was very different from that of the tenants; our lives seemed very removed from the day-to-day realities of life on the Gallowgate estate. Did this create a further barrier to effective participation?

The importance of conversation as a starting point was, however, recognised – to communicate common worries, frustrations and aspirations, even if the tenants' straightforward desires for safe, warm and comfortable homes contrasted with our deliberately complex and intellectualised world.[ix] Common concerns and issues did identify themselves. Most of these are not considered 'architectural' in that they exist on a level of day-to-day detail that tends to be ignored or to be put to one side in the design process (local gangs, inter-neighbourhood division, leaking flat roofs in apartments, the onslaught of football fans through the site on match day). Sometimes students were confronted with things we did not want to hear: dreams of semi-detached living, front and back gardens and own-door access. The difficulty of social housing design and tenant collaboration is that it exists at this practical level: the unglamorous world of refuse collection, estate management and socio-economic factors. Participation prioritises the user's desires, with all their messy, complex lives and needs.

The running of the master class by multiple organisations helped prevent the typical situation of a problem being posited and a solution negotiated within one particular knowledge system and mode of communication, outside the reach of the user. However, leadership and direction of the project was somewhat diluted across the many key organisations. Furthermore, apart from perhaps subliminal and indirect effects, the tenants themselves did not have any real influence on the specific competition briefs drawn up for each school. Was this adequate? Priorities for tenants



were always the phasing of redevelopment and the delivery timescale – factors that never assumed much importance from the students' perspective. Nonetheless, with a 'real life' site, 'real-life' clients and the possibility of the winning schemes being built, the project presented a remarkable opportunity for all involved.

Group master-planning and housing design continued through the academic year and an interim review at Strathclyde University brought tenants and students together again to discuss work-in-progress. Apart from the presentation of the winning designs[x], this was the last formal contact we had with residents. Should there have been ongoing involvement? When should the students/ architect defer to the knowledge of the tenant and when should the tenant step back from the design process?

Following an exhibition of competition entries in the local community hall, tenants were involved in choosing four winning designs . A master plan was to be implemented integrating key ideas from each design and providing a basis for the site's redevelopment[xi]. This was a difficult and fraught process. Should a final master class with external consultant mentors have been undertaken? A short workshop involving the winning students highlighted contrasting opinions about how the entire process should be organised. When should the project have been 'handed over'? As it happened the process resulted in the loss of individual housing designs. However, key issues emerged in all four schemes: a mix of tenure across the site; traditional urban design issues of street edge, building block, hierarchy of access and defined exterior spaces; an increase in density; and the integration of community facilities with housing. Decisions were made on phasing the development and retaining some existing housing, at least for the medium term. Ongoing presentations were given to the LHO and its tenant steering group.

Three-dimensional animations of the master plan were produced to facilitate resident involvement in design changes[xii]. However, because of the schematic nature of the master plan, the things many residents were interested in – the placement of front doors, individual dwelling designs and elevation treatments – were missing from these seductive animations. The residents were not interested in yet another master plan. They wanted hard facts and decisive action.

Throughout the project I was exposed to the – often hugely varying – priorities and aspirations of all the bodies involved: the academics' sometimes unpragmatic but well-intentioned ideals, the LHO's day-to-day estate management concerns, the GHA's broader (and perhaps unambitious) attempts to improve the city-wide housing stock, and the Lighthouse's bigger vision for a flagship regeneration project. This heterogeneous landscape is in such contrast with those earlier redevelopments of the city where a grand vision was often literally bulldozed into reality. Could the vision informing those earlier utopian plans be harnessed to a contemporary idea of consultation and dialogue?

With an unusual project such as this the GHA had no existing models to adapt or learn from. As a new organisation its initial priorities have been the improvement, consolidation and management of its existing stock rather than the development of new housing, and until recently it has shown a hesitant approach to housing development. Have the GHA's ambitions been too low? In its plans to implement the master plan on site with a development partner, individual housing design and quality control, tenure mix and housing type will all have to be monitored carefully to meet the high aspirations for the project. It is hard to be too hopeful. Although partial demolition has begun, on-site progress is slow. Tenants have been exposed to many local and city-wide plans before. Their frustration at the perceived lack of progress is mounting, and those who remain are living in substandard accommodation. Tenants watch while their friends and neighbours leave the area when they can; the enthusiasm for participation is waning. Consultation such as this can be dangerous, as it involves people's lives and raises their hopes and expectations. The prospect of safe and comfortable homes – even that of refurbished kitchens and bathrooms – is still a far off dream for these tenants.

In Summary

Till tells us that 'participation is the space in which hope is negotiated.' Negotiation defines the reality of participation without being idealistic about reaching consensus; it is a positive process alert to reality but positing a better future. Participation must not be seen as a means of getting user support for predetermined actions. In 'What is Architecture's Public?' Giancarlo De Carlo urges planning 'with' rather than 'for' users and reminds us that the defining quality of architecture must be use: its 'fullness', the whole set

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of relationships established with those for whom it was designed, including its life post-construction[xiii]. Architects must acknowledge and engage with the contingency of architectural practice and realise that only so much can be achieved by design alone. People can and will not defend or appropriate developments they have had no involvement in or commitment to, and housing will fail if it does not take into account the lives of the people it is designed for. Participation can ensure the sustainability of housing and resident enfranchisement. Housing can never be considered in isolation.

There has been a tradition of tenant involvement in Glasgow for many decades through tenants' associations, neighbourhood forums and housing committees. The city has engaged in numerous regeneration schemes, not all of them successful. However, resilient ways of life can overcome even dramatic physical changes and the 'stalled lifts...and stalled lives' that Morgan identifies in his Glasgow Sonnets can be ameliorated. Hugh MacDiarmid tells us 'there are plenty of ruined buildings in the world, but no ruined stones.'[xiv] Many tenants still wish to remain in Gallowgate. The process of 'At Home in the City' and its potential outcomes still present a huge opportunity for both the residents and the city at large. Whatever the flaws, disappointments and lack of progress, the project reminds us that architecture is far too important to be left to architects alone.

Stephen Mulhall is an architect working in Dublin

i. Glasgow Sonnets i-x (1972), from *Collected Poems*, Edwin Morgan, 1990 **ii.** The 'decentralisation of 550,000 of the population of 1,128,000' was one such proposal. **iii.** Thirty-one storeys over ground and 90.8 metres high. Today these towers are one positive example of how a strict management regime can turn housing around. Previously they were no-go areas with high vacancy rates and a poor public perception. However, the introduction of a concierge service, extra security and physical boundaries at ground level have changed this. **iv.** A traditional community bath and washhouse. **v** John Turner tells us that deficiencies and imperfections in one's housing are infinitely more tolerable if they are your responsibility than if they are somebody else's. Quoted in *Architecture and Participation*, 2005. **vi.** Key institutions included the Mackintosh School of Architecture at the Glasgow School of Art and Strathclyde University's Department of Architecture (both its Urban Design and Advanced Architecture Units), the Lighthouse (Scotland's National Centre for Architecture and Design and deliverer of the National Programme for Architecture), the GHA (the city's new social landlord following transfer of the entire municipal housing stock) and East End Community Homes, and the Local Housing Organisation (LHO), which manages social housing stock on a day-to-day basis. **vii.** From *Architecture and Participation*, 2005. **viii.** The reductive nature of architectural drawings requires architectural imagination to achieve the translation from drawing to building. **ix.** Even though, as Till notes, 'this challenges normative patterns of professional and academic legitimacy'. **x.** The judging panel also included representatives from the GHA and three external architects. **xi.** Initially only one design was to be chosen. However, the individual schools wanted more than one competition winner. From the Mackintosh School of Architecture Gideon Purser explored the perimeter block and Stephen Mulhall reinterpreted traditional 'back-to-back', 'Colony' and 'cross-over' schemes. From Strathclyde University Ewan Imrie explored wholesale retention and redevelopment and Rachel Cleminson examined a hierarchy of building blocks and access routes. **xii.** Produced by the Digital Design Studio. / **xiii.** Quoted in *Architecture and Participation*, 2005. **xiv.** From *On A Raised Beach, Stony Limits and Other Poems*, 1934.

16

Pallas Heights

MARK CULLEN AND BRIAN DUGGAN

How did Pallas come into being and what is your relationship with the Monto area of Dublin and the community there?

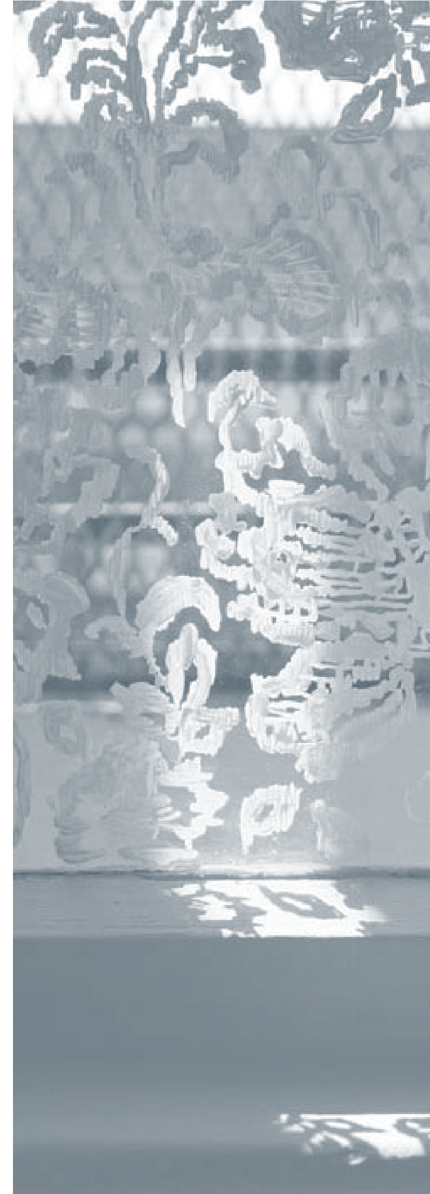
MC: When we left college we needed a space to work, and I guess the central motivation was to have a space where we could work ourselves, but also to facilitate an environment where there would be other artists, providing some sense of a collective, a community, and so on. As a group of artsts we are not necessarily working on projects together but we were keen to provide a creative environment with an atmosphere of positivism.

This evolved into a collaborative partnership between Brian Duggan and I whereby we curated exhibitions in Foley Street studios and other alternative sites in Dublin and elsewhere[i]. Our exhibition policy at that time was largely a reaction to the encroachment of office development into the warehouse sites of Dublin's inner city. We had a warehouse space that was situated primly in the sights of urban regeneration so we were aware that our low rent warehouse was destined to become high rent empty office space. Our tenure was due up in 2001.

In October 2000 we curated *Precinct*[ii], a poster exhibition, that used the materials of the development boom - site hoardings - as a canvas for artists to react to the changing face of Dublin and to make a place for culture in the midst of the city's redevelopment. After a number of years of discussing the possibilities for artists in Dublin we entered into a productive and beneficial partnership with the city with the council giving us access to unoccupied semi derelict flats in Sean Tracey House to use as studios for artists.

To kick-start Pallas Heights we had two group exhibitions *Fresh Fruit*[iii] (02/2003) and *Point of no Return*[iv] (03/2003) but after these shows, we decided it might be more productive to change direction and to do focused projects with just one artist, or with a small group of up to three artists. Pallas Heights seems to lend itself best to project-based works. We were interested to see how artists would respond to the whole location, to make work as a cohesive interplay with the site. We felt that this engagement with the architecture and site-specifics of the environment could be achieved more successfully with solo projects.

The artists we chose have been of a similar generation more or less to ourselves. We made a conscious decision to give support to artists that are around us, as we wanted to work with a peerage to articulate and represent a developing independent scene in Dublin at the time while taking account of the wider network that the scene was plugging into.



Sarah O'Toole, Acrylic paint on kitchen windw, Flat 30, Sean Tracey House

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Mark Cullen and Brian Duggan In 1996 Mark Cullen and Brian Duggan formed Pallas Studios in Dublin's inner city. This multi functional art space has a wide range of services and ongoing projects. From art studios to contemporary exhibitions, Pallas was established to harness, engage and provoke. http://www.pallasprojects.org. Interview conducted by Daniel Ryan

Can you describe some of the different ways artists reacted to Sean Tracey house – what themes cropped up regularly?
BD: I don't think there is one unifying theme, but obviously the artists are sensitive to the location and understand that this is also a community. These are people's homes and you need to respect that.

How do Pallas and the local community interract?
BD: Well we were quite clear that although this was art in a community, it was not Community Art. However all the residents were invited to the exhibitions and could come in and look around the studios if they were interested. Most of them though, were uninterested, as is the case with the majority of the population. We had a friendly neighbourly relationship with the people who lived in the flats, but most of the interaction with the community happened with the kids. They were curious, but were also just looking out for a bit of fun.

Separately Pallas has done projects with young people from different flat complexes in the area, but this was not connected to the Pallas Heights project.

Can you explain further your relationship with the regeneration of the north east inner city?
BD: Since 1996 we have been doing projects in the area: artists have been working here and I suppose adding something to the fabric of the area and becoming part of the community. In some ways we have been doing the same things we did years ago, and the regeneration has happened around us - new shops, new flats, upgrading the paths and roads, new houses, new neighbours etc.

We would welcome the official 'regeneration' of course, because it has brought many positive changes for the people in the north east inner city, which is traditionally a much neglected and under resourced part of the city. 10 years ago there were hardly any shops around and there was no glass on Foley street because it just wouldn't last.

However we still feel there is a necessity for planning to facilitate the art sector, otherwise development will kill off any indigenous projects by driving rents up. And then the area can become dead which is something the docklands is fighting - everything closes after work and then everyone leaves. There is a balance that needs to be found, and a bit of intelligent joined up thinking is required to make sure the city remains a multi-layered healthy vibrant mix of culture, people and projects. Otherwise the boredom will kill us all.

i. *Pre-Millennial Tension (03/1999), Salon 99 (12/1999)* **ii.** *Dublin(10/2000) and Belfast(04/2002), the latter in collaboration with Catalyst Arts.* **iii.** *Showing a number of artists based in Ireland such as Cristophe Neumann, Gemma Browne, Clive Murphy, Cormac Healy and Neva Elliott, some of whom had studios in Pallas* **iV.***We invited Free Association, a curatorial grouping of Mark Titchner, Jari Lager and Colin Ledwith from London to repsond to the space. This show would have given some artists like Brian Griffiths, Tobias Collier, Flatpack001 and Gina Tornatore their first showing in Dublin.*

17

‘Comment Vivre Ensemble’: Imagining and Designing Community in the Work of Candilis-Josic-Woods

TOM AVERMAETE

We are concerned with discovering how the community of individual and collective is affirmed in our time, how to put the urbanized individual and his environment into harmony, how to reconcile the natural and permanent human scale with the ever increasing scale of society in our time.
Shadrach Woods, 1966

Looking back at the debates and discourses in the 1950s and 1960s it seems as if discussions on community design within the field of architecture were determined by two main and distinct lines of argument. A first and dominant line held that architects and urban planners were the main proponents of the invention of new forms for a community characterized by welfare and prosperity. This line was characterized by a sense of optimism and a blind belief in the capacity of architecture to design communities for a new age. Central to this perspective was the conviction that it was within the architects’ skill and responsibility to invent forms for emergent social realities.

Besides this first ‘deterministic’ line of thought, a second line - that could be called ‘relativistic’ - emerged. This did not come from the world of practising architects but rather from the field of architectural history and from the related fields of urban sociology and anthropology. Its emphasis lay not in the makeability of communities, but instead in the inherent logic of self-determination and self-organisation that characterized so many communities and their spatial expression. The exhibition and book *Architecture Without Architects* by Bernard Rudofsky of 1965 exemplifies this line of thought that simultaneously also questioned the necessity for the architectural profession at all.

Since the1950s these two lines of thought have been formative in the debate on community design. By extension we can argue that they have demarcated an important field of tension that remains formative for contemporary thought and discussion. After all, it seems rather difficult to approach community design without falling into a dichotomous discussion that opposes the ‘social engineering’ approach of architects that claim to be able to design built environments for communities to the ‘relativistic perspective’ that questions the role of the disciplines of architecture and urban planning in influencing communities.

That this field of tension can also be made operational in a productive way becomes clear in the work on community design by Team 10; a group of young architects active between 1953 and 1981 and composed of, amongst others, Alison and Peter Smithson, Jakob Bakema, Aldo Van Eyck, Georges Candilis and Shadrach Woods. Particularly in the work of Georges Candilis, Alexis Josic and Shadrach Woods - the French contributors to Team 10 - the question of designing the community was of paramount importance. Commenting on their work the partners wrote: ‘The articulation of public and private domains, of zones of community and zones of privacy, is the basis for the physical expression of any social organization.’

Between *forma urbis* and *praxis*

The particularity of the approach of Candilis-Josic-Woods resided in the fact that the question of community design was seen as a question of the interrelation between architectural form and spatial practice, between *forma urbis* and *praxis*. The partnership based their viewpoint on the methods and insights that were offered by the social sciences, such as the *ethnologie sociale* by Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe. In the study *Paris et l'agglomération Parisienne: L'espace social dans une grande cité,* Chombart de Lauwe had underlined the complex and diversified character of the urban fabric of traditional European cities.[i] Through the example of the *XIIème arrondisement* of Paris the French geographer demonstrated that the traditional European city was the result of a complex weaving of interrelated physical and social entities. By means of the detailed mapping of roads, housing developments, shops, garages and other collective services Chombart de Lauwe depicted an urban quarter as a complex and varied weave of private and collective entities. According to Chombart it was the complex character of this urban tissue that created community life and assigned certain qualities of living to an urban quarter.

Following these sociological investigations Shadrach Woods published an important article in 1962 in the avant-garde periodical *Le Carré Bleu* that introduced the partnership's structuring concept for the urban realm: the *web*. Candilis-Josic-Woods perceived the urban realm as a matter of spatial practices or activities. Hence the *web* article begins:

Architecture and planning, which are each part of the other, are concerned with the organisation of places and ways for the carrying out of man's activities. The architectural

process begins with a way of thinking about organisation in a given place-time, then establishes a system of relationships and, finally, achieves plastic expression.[ii]

The spatial practices of inhabitants, ie. their practices of dwelling and building, were for Woods of paramount importance in both thinking about and designing community life. According to Woods, the activities or spatial practices that define the urban realm had radically changed during the post-war period. In particular the way that spatial practices unfold had been subject to a major change:

Architecture could operate within the limits of purely visual disciplines as long as societies were evolving within the limits of perceivable human groupings (villages and towns, classes, castes and sects). With the breakdown of these limits and as man evolves towards a universal society, the need is felt to discover a clear framework for planning and architecture.[iii]

Hence, conceptions of community would have to be amended. According to Woods, the rhythms and practices of post-war society demanded a reframing of attitudes towards urban planning . He proposed 'to set up systems (intellectual frames) that [could] relate activities [to each other]. . . . The purpose of any putting-together [is] to create a whole which is greater then the sum of the parts, [this] is only possible if we can guarantee a whole – a total synthetic order of all the functions.'[iv]

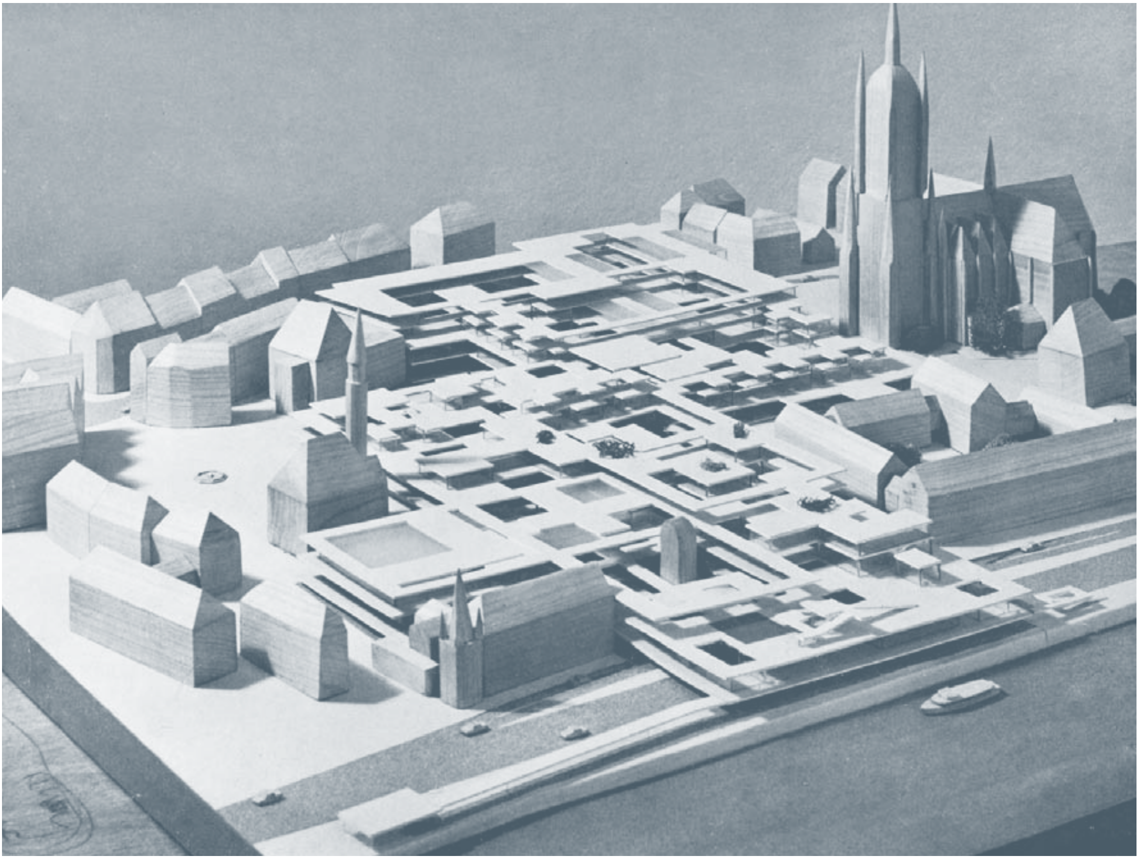
Candilis-Josic-Woods' concept of the *web* was an investigation into the possibility of designing a system that allows different practices and programmes to be woven into a continuous patch of urban tissue, both physical and social. 'The proposals we have developed are characterized by the fact that the site is occupied in such a way that the various activities of the public and private domains are housed in what amounts to a continuous building.'[v]

The opportunities inherent in the *web* concept became clear in the competition entry for the reconstruction of Frankfurt-Römerberg. The project site was an entirely devastated area situated between the Römer (city hall) and the Dom (cathedral) in the city centre of Frankfurt beside the river Main. In Frankfurt-Römerberg the brief consisted mainly of the reconstruction of the centre of a historical city. However, the programme entailed not only the re-installation of the public and dwelling functions that were part of the site before its destruction, but also the introduction of new functions such as parking garages and large shopping facilities that corresponded to post-war urban realities and aspirations. Candilis-Josic-Woods' proposal for the historical city centre of Frankfurt was neither a clear return to the traditional urban fabric, nor a plea for a radically different type of urban form:

The centre of Frankfurt should not be turned into a museum. A system has to be found that allows those who live there to create their own physical milieu with a maximum of ease, and to gradually develop it in keeping with their needs.[vi]

Architectonically the *web* is composed of three elements: decks, *tracés* and open spaces. A five-storey layering of decks is folded in between the Dom, the Römer and other adjacent historical buildings. The decks are large structural surfaces that can accommodate buildings and are supported by a coordinate column grid with an interval of 9 m. The project presents itself as a dense piece of urban fabric that results from the juxtaposition of three levels of decks above ground level. At regular distances the decks are punctuated by vertical circulation elements (escalators and elevators). The surface of the decks is structured by pedestrian *tracés*. These are articulated through a 4 m bay that deviates between the structural grid of columns. As a sectional model exemplifies, in this project the *tracés* are conceived as true streets. They are not only pathways, but define, just like the traditional street pattern, a grid of technical supplies and services for the project. As in a traditional urban fabric, private buildings can be positioned along the street and connected to these services.

To the resulting maze a third element is added: large rectangular incisions that create open spaces that run alternatively over a single level or cut through multiple levels. These incisions create differentiation within the grid. They introduce a certain scale to the grid and as such are decisive for the positioning of functions at particular places on the decks. Occasionally a whole square of the grid is preserved so that large functions can be located there. At other places the incisions turn the decks into a denticulate foundation that can only accommodate small scale functions such as housing and workshops. Above all, the incisions connect the different levels spatially. They



Frankfurt Web Model

create spatial relations and perspectives and turn the decks into a multi-layered landscape. As the wire model of the project illustrates, the overlay of decks, *tracés* and incisions results in an urban landscape that can accommodate the developing urbanity, its changes and growth. As Woods underlined: 'this system enabled us to organize the multitude of activities called for in the program into a clear comprehensible, adaptable order.'[vii]

The ground plans illustrate how the Frankfurt *web* accommodates a large variety of functions within its confines. The subterranean decks are uninterrupted floors that house parking spaces, delivery roads and quays. Above this the *web* accommodates housing, workshops, markets, offices, a cinema, multiple auditoria, a library, a youth centre and several restaurants. The rigid structure of the *web* seems to possess the capacity to house a large typological variety of buildings. On the east side of the project modest workshops with housing have a view over the river Main, while on the west side large top-lit halls offer the *Historischen Museum* the necessary exhibition space.

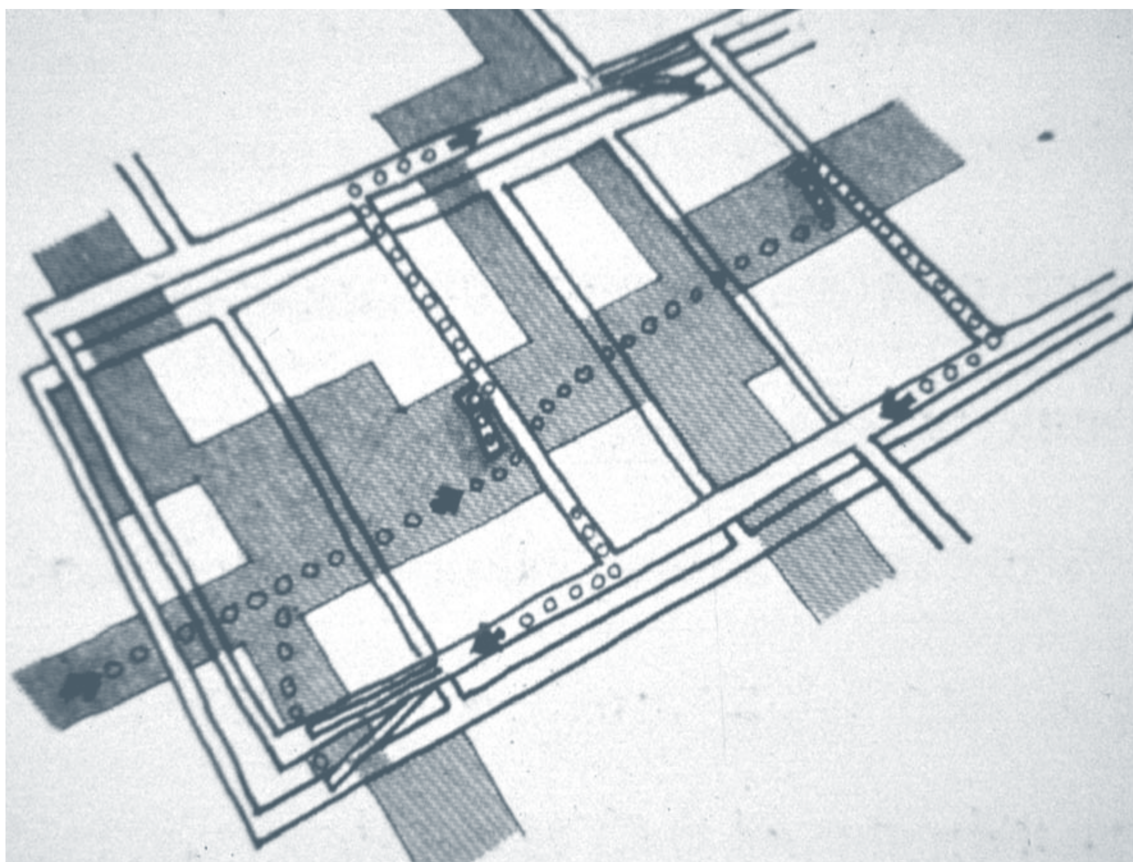
The Frankfurt *web* was not only meant to accommodate growth and change within its confines, but also to allow a certain adaptation to the context. This is particularly evident on the ground floor. A drawing which compares the site before destruction with the proposed development demonstrates that the scale, grain and traces of the medieval urban fabric were re-interpreted on the ground-level. Woods considered this an attempt 'to re-establish the same human scale.'[viii]

Web: Weaving the Community

In 1974 Alison Smithson, the main theoretician and historiographer of the Team 10 group, offered a detailed analysis of the approach of Candilis-Josic-Woods in her article *How to Recognise and Read Mat-Building. Mainstream Architecture as It Developed towards the Mat-Building*. In her text Smithson connects the *web* metaphor to a particular conception of urban design that she calls *web*-building or *mat*-building. Smithson wrote:

> *Mat-building can be said to epitomise the anonymous collective; where the functions come to enrich the fabric, and the individual gains new freedoms of action through a new and shuffled order, based on interconnection, close-knit patterns of association, and possibilities for growth, diminution, and change.* [ix]

Smithson emphasised that the metaphor of the *web* refers to an important property of the traditional European urban realm: density. As Alison Smithson pointed out, the project for Frankfurt-Römerberg belongs to a tradition of post-war projects that attempted to recapture the social, spatial and functional density of the traditional European city. Smithson drew attention to a whole range of post-war building projects that can be said to illustrate this attitude. She named amongst others the *Venice Hospital* project (1964) by Le Corbusier and the Smithsons own project for the *Langside competition* (1958). From this perspective a second paramount meaning of the *web* metaphor appears. The *web* denotes an architectural practice that abandons

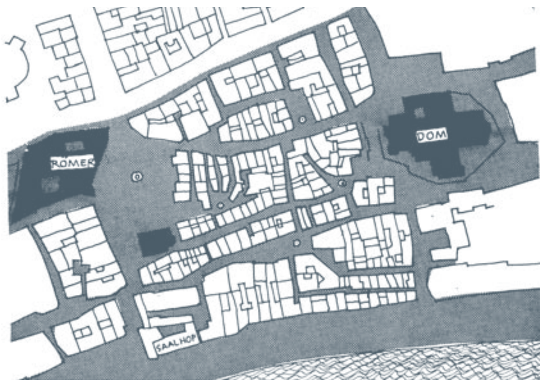

Web Diagram

the model of the city as a compilation of individual buildings and replaces it with a conception of the urban as *tissue:* 'They are not the sum of length, height and largeness but rather a two-dimensional dense fabric, where man walks and lives in.'[x]

The *web* is thus a function of architectural density. It is not, however, understood as a matter of building height or floor-to-area ratio. This is made clear by Alison Smithson in her comparison of Aldo Van Eyck's *Municipal Orphanage* (Amsterdam, 1957-1960) and Candilis-Josic-Woods' *Berlin Free University* (1963). Smithson distinguished between these two projects because they represent a different way of organizing and composing urban space. While Van Eyck's orphanage is based on the so-called 'configurative principle' that structurally assembles similar architectural elements, the Berlin *web* or *mat* demonstrates another organizing principle. Through a work of the English artist Louise Nevelson, a dense cluster of dissimilar cases, Smithson illustrated that the mat is not an addition of isomorphic elements, but rather a structured nesting of diverse spatial and social units. While Van Eyck's orphanage is the repetition of 'plain sameness', in the case of the Berlin mat 'apparent sameness is the carrying order', according to Smithson.

Undeniably, in the model of density that Candilis-Josic-Woods strove for with their *web* metaphor sameness is not an issue. Density is considered here to be the inextricable weaving of diverse built and social entities at different scale levels, as can be perceived in the urban tissue of traditional European cities. It is understood as the capacity to interlace the different architectural, urban and social elements into a close-knit urban fabric. Alison Smithson recognized this attitude in the *Pastoor van Ars Church* (1970-1973) by Aldo van Eyck. Within a traditional closed architectural volume several urban figures are juxtaposed: chapels, sloping street *(via sacra)* and meeting place ('crypt')[xi] are united in the church's austere architectonic form. Smithson held that the interrelation and weaving of urban figures results in the building's capacity to invite different forms of appropriation and thus different practices. Precisely this 'overlay of patterns of use: the disintegration of rigidity through this meshing . . . make this a nugget of mat-architecture'.[xii] Likewise, the project for Frankfurt-Römerberg is a meshing of urban, architectural and social figures. The superimposition of the layer of tracès and the layer of *espaces ouverts* results in an orthogonal tissue. The ensuing product is a dense, two-dimensional patch of urban fabric that stands midway between an architectural building and an urban project.

Another reading that Candilis-Josic-Woods recognised in the *web* metaphor was its ability to invite appropriation. This reading can be clarified through a historical parallel.[xiii] The definition of architecture through the figure of the mat is reminiscent of a cardinal text in modern architectural theory: Gottfried Semper's 1860 essay *Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts or Practical Aesthetics.*[xiv] In this essay Semper stated that building originates with the use of woven fabrics to define social space. For Semper the essential characteristic of these woven fabrics, or mats, is not the fact that they are placed in space as such, but



Frankfurt site before deconstruction

Frankfurt proposed

rather the fact that they 'are the production of space itself, launching the very idea of occupation'.[xv] The texture of the woven fabrics, their sensuous play, opens up a space of exchange. The weave produces the very idea of a family that might occupy it.

Candilis-Josic-Woods' metaphor of the *web* seems to point to a similar relation between architectural form and community. The *web* was thought to be an intricate juxtaposition of everyday urban (streets, squares, bridges) and architectural elements, that is: 'lifting the everyday to a poetic level'.[xvi] The resulting 'close-knit pattern'[xvii] is thought to produce – as in Semper's example of the woven fabric not only a built fabric that invites relentless appropriation and re-appropriation, but also community. This faculty to invite appropriation is a crucial theme within the theory of Candilis-Josic-Woods. During the post-war period, with the built environment in Western Europe increasingly subject to the control of the welfare state and consumer society, the active participation of inhabitants in their environment was seen to be of prime importance. As Alison Smithson underlined, dense *webs* were not only considered 'the right living pattern for our way of life, and the equipment that serves it, but also . . . the right symbols to satisfy our present cultural aspirations'.[xviii]

The *web* does not symbolize this faculty of appropriation and identification through linguistic preconditions or through the adoption of a certain kind of style, but rather through its very materiality. It is the tissue of the *web*, its material of clustered and interrelated spaces that symbolizes the possibility of appropriation and thus community. The *web* turns out to be a design strategy aimed, through the introduction of density, at establishing a more cultured relationship between modern man and physical space.

A Question of Idiorythmie

With their concept of the *web* Candilis-Josic-Woods pointed to a way beyond the opposition between deterministic and relativistic perspectives on community design. By conceiving the *web* as a matter of the interrelation between architectural form and spatial practices, the partnership defined community design as a venture that consists simultaneously of architectural determination and of providing space for that which can never be fully determined.

Looking back on experiences such as those of Candilis-Josic-Woods the French sociologist Roland Barthes initiated a course in 1977 at the College de France entitled: C*omment vivre ensemble* (How to Live Together).[ixx] Barthes underlined in his course that dealing with community and sociability was necessarily a question of respecting spatial practices: of respecting individual rhythms or *idiorhytmie.*

Barthes stressed however that taking *idiorythmie* as a point of departure could lead to extremes. If one extreme was 'solitude', the second according to Barthes were architectural structures that were hostile to *idiorhytmie* such as phalansteries and *couvents*. For Barthes, the conditions for true community life depended on the possibility of mediation; it resulted from a structure that offers a collective framework while at the same time allowing the individual to reveal his own particular rhythm

Barthes finished his course with the observation that from the perspective of *idiorythmie* or spatial practice the issue of community design, of *vivre ensemble*, thus revolved around one simple question: 'What distance should we keep from the "other" to engender sociability and avoid alienation?' To this day this question remains one of the fundamental issues of community design.

Web Diagram

Tom Avermaete is an architect and the author of *Another Modern: the post-War Architecture and Urbanism of Candilis-Josic-Woods*. He is an editor of *OASE Architectural Journal.*

i. Chombart de Lauwe, *Paris et l'agglomération parisienne -Tome 1*, op. cit., 261. **ii** Woods, Shadrach, 'Web', *Le Carré Bleu*, no. 3, 1962, s.p. **iii** Ibid.
iv Ibid. **v** 'Team 10/CIAM 10', op. cit., 45. **vi** Candilis, Georges, Josic, Alexis and Woods, Shadrach, 'Recherches d'Architecture', *L'Architecture d'Aujoud'hui,* no. 115, 1964, 16. Quote in French: Du centre de Francfort, il ne faut pas faire un musée. Il faut découvrir un système qui permette aux citadins de créer leur milieu physique avec un maximum de facilités et de le faire évoluer au fur et à mesure des besoins. **vii** Woods, Shadrach, 'The man in the street. Lectures given in Scandinavia', unpublished text, in: Woods/RISD, (box 6), February 1966, 1-24. **viii** Ibid. **ix** Smithson, Alison, 'How to Recognise and Read Mat-Building. Mainstream Architecture as It Developed towards the Mat-Building', *Architectural Design,* no. 9, 1974, 573-590. **x** Smithson, 'How to Recognise and Read Mat-Building', op. cit., 576 **xi** See Strauven, Aldo Van Eyck, op. cit. **xii** Smithson, 'How to Recognise and Read Mat-Building', op. cit., 575. **xiii** The Smithsons themselves placed their own work on several occasions in line with several of their historical predecessors. See for instance: Smithson, Peter, 'Three Generations', *OASE*, no. 51, 1999, 82-93. **xiv** Semper, Gottfried, 'Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts or Practical Aesthetics' in: Semper, Gottfried, *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, translated by H.F. Mallgrave and W. Herrmann (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1989), 215-231. **xv** Wigley, Mark, *White Walls Designer Dresses. The Fashioning of Modern Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1997), 11. **xvi** Smithson, *'How to Recognise and Read Mat-Building'*, op. cit., 584. **xvii** Ibid, 573. **xviii** Smithson, Alison and Smithson, Peter, Ordinariness and Light. *Urban Theories 1952-1960 and Their Application in a Building Project 1963-1970* (Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1970), 161. **xiv** See Barthes, Roland, *Comment Vivre Ensemble. Notes de cours et de séminaires au Collège de France, 1976-1977* (Paris, Seuil, 2002).

18

Athlumney Villas

NUALA FLOOD

I live on a street called Athlumney Villas. It's a charminglittle cul-de-sac just off Ranelagh Road, but invisible from it as it is tucked away behind a large copper clad, barrel shaped house. I rent my house from Jim, my neighbour. Most people on the street rent their houses from him. Having him live close by is handy because he can just call by to fix things or collect the rent. He has entrusted my next-door neighbour, Gretta, with a spare set of keys for every house on the street which he owns. This may seem unusual but proves to be very useful when I lock myself out of my house or when I forget to turn the immersion off and the pipes bang so loudly that Gretta cannot sleep. Gretta, who has lived here all her life, has a husband called Paddy and a tiny poodle called Penny. Everyone stops to admire Penny when he takes her out for her morning walk. Every weekday morning I am awoken by the sound of Tito running up the street screaming 'No, I don't want to'. His mother chases after him shouting 'Get into that car, you have to go to school'. Tito and his pals like to push leaves through my letterbox and then run away and hide. On sunny days when I sit on the footpath outside my house eating ice cream some other neighbours on deckchairs, sunning themselves or reading the paper, join me. When I leave for the office in the morning, work in 'Hopkins and Lockharts' panel beaters is already well under-way. The music from their radio fills the street. The mechanic greets me with a bright and breezy 'Good Morning'. It is always a good morning in Athlumney Villas. When I return in the evenings, and turn the corner into the street I feel as though I am home even before I enter my house.

In order to give some explanation as to why a sense of place and community exists on this street and not on others I will refer to the theories of N.J. Habraken. In his book *The Structure of the Ordinary* he objectively examines the everyday built environment and from this deduces principles which order it. He concludes that the built environment is structured and can be understood with reference to both physical order and territorial order.

He suggests that the physical order is organised by levels in a hierarchical manner and that these should be correctly utilised in design so as to create an environment that is rich in form and has a sense of place:

The levels are as follows

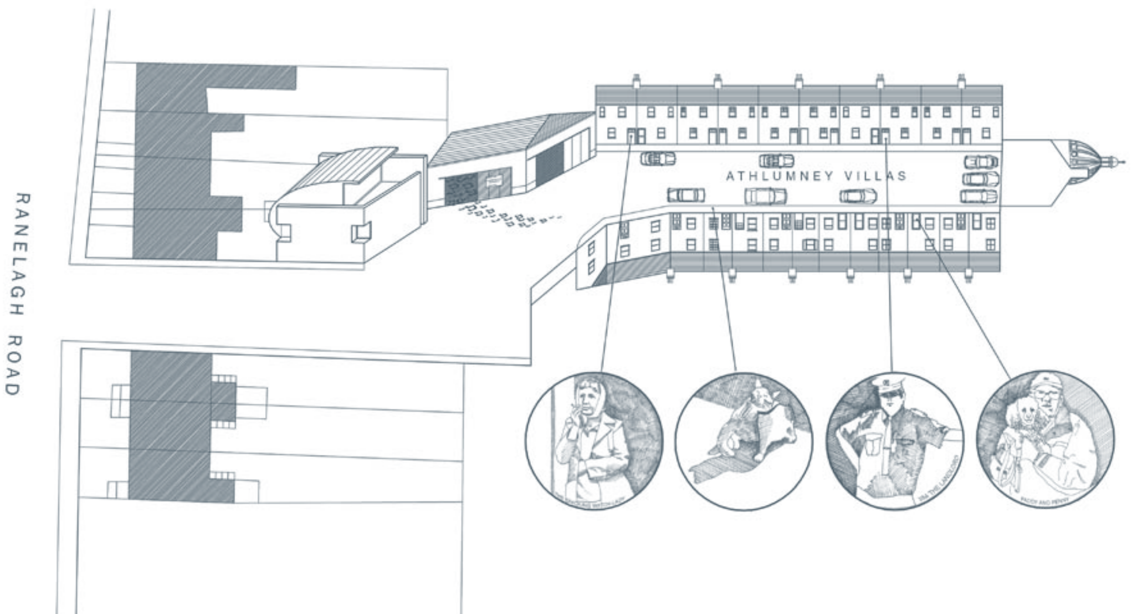
1. Street Network
2. Building
3. Infill

(externally – windows, doors and porches; internally - partitioning and equipment)

4. Furniture
5. Utensils

A higher level always dominates each successive lower level. This characteristic is common to most historic cities and towns. In the modern city the street level does not exist in the same form. Here, the architect is guilty of acting independently of the urban plan, creating objects in free flowing space. In failing to recognise the supremacy of the urban plan the consequential urban space is ill defined. In such objectified dwelling schemes, the external infill elements are regulated by the architect and hence become part of the building level. This elimination of both the street level and the infill level has resulted in a coarsening of the urban grain.

In Athlumney Villas, the levels described by Habraken are correctly utilised. The cul-de sac informs the shape and form of the buildings. The individual houses dictate the infill, which in turn organises the furniture that in turn houses the utensils. When levels are utilised correctly sub-ordinate levels can mutate without disturbing their overriding organiser. This principle is evident on the street façade where the owner changes windows and doors as he sees fit without affecting the building or the street network. The renter may not have the ability to change the infill level, but they can control the furniture and utensil level without disturbing it. Thus, the correct use of levels renders an environment adaptable for its inhabitants. The environment's ability to mutate is essential in creating a viable and lively place with a sense of community. 'Built environment, like all complex phenomena, artificial and natural, endures by transforming its parts'.



Adaptability in the external image of the dwellings in Athlumney Villas allows for self-expression of the individual to the rest of the community. The inhabitant's individual presence can be felt by the rest of the community through the transformation of infill, furniture and utensil level. The occupier paints and decorates his abode, he changes the internal layout of furniture, he places flower pots, herbs or ornaments in the window sill or he simply hangs a poster on a wall. All such acts impact on the external communal space.

According to Habraken, territorial order is concerned with the control of space and the ability to defend that space against unwanted intrusion. The greater the territorial depth the more control the inhabitant has over what comes in and goes out of his home. The ability to shift this territorial boundary is fundamental to contributing to a sense of ownership of a place.

The line of physical ownership in Athlumney Villas is stark. Front facades abut the footpath directly. There are no front gardens, railings or steps to soften the material boundary. As a result of this, people allow their possessions to spill out onto the street, thus extending their personal territorial boundary. Residents park their cars, bicycles, tricycles, wheely-bins, and traffic cones outside their respective homes. 'Territorial boundaries are established by acts. Such acts usually seek stable forms to relate to, if not always to abide by'. The territorial depth is further widened by the creation of internal draught lobbies in the homes.

Although there is a lack of physical territorial depth where the relationship of the individual abode to the street is concerned, the territorial depth of the street itself to the rest of the city is expanded. There are a couple of factors that have aided this territorial expansion. Firstly, the panel beaters workshop marks the end of the public domain. The street kinks behind it and is therefore hidden from Ranelagh Road. Secondly, the streets width narrows significantly where the row of houses begins. An outsider would feel like they are intruding beyond this point. Thirdly, strangers don't enter the street because it is clearly a cul-de sac (it being terminated by a blank gable end). And finally, the entrance is guarded by the lady from no .29, smoking at her doorstep. She keeps a watchful, intimidating eye on intruders. Her territorial defence of the street is somewhat ambiguous, but mostly successful.

Habraken considers the 'judicious articulation of territory' to be of the utmost importance when designing. However, in Athlumney Villas it is the distinct lack of physical territorial articulation of the individual abode in conjunction with the physical territorial articulation of the entire housing development as an entity, separated from the rest of the city, that has assisted the evolution of a community. The residents here live in close quarters with their neighbours, yet their neighbourhood has both physical and territorial distance from the rest of the city.

An infinite number of physical outcomes are possible from the 'proper use of levels' and the careful articulation of territorial depth of a group of dwellings from the world beyond them. However, there are specific factors, within these constraints, that seem to have aided the formation of a community in Athlumney Villas. The human scale of the street is critical. With cars parked on each side the lane is just wide enough to drive ones car down the centre at a very slow speed. The relatively small scale of the street and the lack of outdoor space at the back of one's house make random encounters with people outside one's front door inevitable. The quantity of houses seems to be just right in order for the inhabitants' to know who is living where. The inhabitants themselves are consistently welcoming to new residents and friendly to old. One can see all the activity on the street from ones living room and thus one is part of that activity.

This list of attributes, which have contributed to the place making, is not exhaustive. So if you go to see the new copper-clad house at the entrance to Athlumney Villas examine also the ordinary street behind it

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Nuala Flood is an architect

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The Poem of the Wrong Angle : Pleasure in Difference at Ivry-sur-Seine

KEVIN DONOVAN

Knowing, in architecture, does not mean passively conforming to and materializing the established criteria. It means giving voice to that which was silent, it is adding to that which you think you know.
Jean Renaudie, interviewed in Technique et Architecture, December 1976

By 1968, God had been dead for a good 86 years, Le Corbusier for mere months[i]. In the case of the former passing, the first half of the 20th century saw a kind of philosophical and cultural regency with various pretenders rolling in to fill the void. These successive movements inevitably had their wider cultural implications and, coupled with technical innovation and political circumstance, resulted in the various types of Modernism we associate with this extended period.

By 1968 in France, the crisis of meaning occasioned by these progressive developments had come to a well-documented head. Though we might now find it difficult to conceive of a philosophical movement leading directly to political rebellion, it is also hard to imagine in our time that a Minister for Culture will have been an internationally renowned novelist and author of a bestseller on the subject of the human condition[ii]. Existentialism, the dominant philosophical movement of the time, was so culturally embedded in France as to cause Sartre, its major exponent, to publicly admonish a columnist in a popular journal for misappropriation of the term[iii]. Though commonly conceived of as nihilistic, its tenets of freedom of choice, authenticity, the will to engagement, and the responsibility of each individual for the wellbeing of mankind were essentially optimistic and have been described, again by Sartre, as a form of Humanism[iv]. Sartre himself encourages us to largely abandon the metaphysical tradition and construct another type of thinking based on the specific, lived reality of human beings.

The year of Le Corbusier's death was also that of Foucault's public elaboration of the concept of heterotopia in which, for architecture, he opened up an abstract and imaginative territory of concrete places which are generated by difference. The very next year, Jean Renaudie was awarded the project to renew the town centre of Ivry-Sur-Seine.

Ivry-Sur-Seine

Ivry had long been a progressive suburb of Paris, a *banlieue rouge* whose successive socialist councils had encouraged the interests of the working class with pioneering social housing projects since the 1920s. By the '60s, however, the area's ever increasing population required an expansion of the housing stock. Current practice in France favoured the construction of *grandes ensembles* of up to 4,000 units, heroic towers set in planned cities in which all administrative, cultural and commercial insertions were segregated from living accommodation. The result, *tout court,* was the mass zoning of individuals and families in isolation rather than the communal ideal implicit in the early projects at Ivry.

Ivry was the town in which Renaudie (1925-1981) chose to establish his practice, having recently departed the Atelier de Montrouge where he had tempered his *Beaux Arts* training and subsequent apprenticeship in the office of Perret. In his interview for the project, Renaudie showed his scheme for Le Vaudreil, a cliffside housing scheme designed for a site near Rouen which contested the modernist tendency to exclude the individual from the city.

Of the several projects made by Renaudie at Ivry (including 1,700 apartments over 20 years), the one that best serves our discussion is the Jeanne Hachette complex, two artificial hills each of nine storeys and connected across a busy street in the town centre (the rue Lenine, no less). These comprised duplex apartments and terraces based on a triangular geometry, built above a network of offices, shops, cinemas and carparking.

Ambiguous Difference

By making the most of difference, we have a greater chance of producing suitable houses.
Jean Renaudie, interviewed in *Architecture et Construction, 1976*

Those who have a keen feeling for difference in sameness are more open to metaphor, in that they, in order to realize the difference that is critical to their vision, are obliged to project their imagination onto that which is the same, the conventional, the public rather than the creative imagination. This is what poets do. Thereby, they arrive at a position which opens a gap between multiple readings of a text in which various meanings may reside.

The most immediate response to J*eanne Hachette* is to say that it is different both from other buildings and within itself. Unlike many buildings which have acquired the ascription 'willful', its difference is, however, its very generator rather than the more usual requirements of function or even the sociological claims for architecture

which were then conventional. Thus, it is a mountain for living rather than a machine, a verdant mountain which can be climbed or inhabited. External stairs wind through the complex (aptly named), over terraces and past neighbouring apartments in the manner of a Greek hill village, separating the car from the pedestrian and prioritizing the circulation of man over that of machine. The pedestrian, therefore, always has the option of engaging with the building at the scale of his body, an option which he, like the narrator of Robert Frost's famous poem, can choose over the road more traveled by.[v]

If, by ambiguity, we mean the simultaneous sustaining by the same work of two or more distinctly different meanings which cannot be resolved into one,[vi] we can also assert that Renaudie's building is ambiguous. The superposition of triangular terraces on the building, for example, makes ground on that which is built. Thus, you may see rain on the ground outside your window though you understand that you live on the 7th floor, two juxtaposed conditions which give a sense of dwelling in a place outside of one's immediate total comprehension. You may, though inhabiting an apartment, stand away from it in your own territory and look it in the face, rather like the hero of Sartre's *Nausea*, in his standoff with The Other[vii]. Because of the stepped section allowed in this terracing, the inhabitant exists in his own territory and can cultivate it whilst being projected into the general and communal environment above and below; the individual is, in this way, obliged to engage with humanity at large in the space of his dwelling. This has the effect of obviating the void, or gulf, which surrounds the sheer towerblock and which has become an image *par excellence* of the alienation of Modern man; here one stands inside and outside one's dwelling simultaneously, at home and amongst men.

Inside the apartments, the theme continues. In terms of structure, Renaudie's building eschews the primacy of supporting walls positioned at right angles whilst all the while retaining the heavy in-situ concrete construction which pertained to conventional apartment-block building. Thus, many of his rooms are triangular in plan often ending in a point, a move which many practitioners have condemned as perverse and suggestive of excessive formalism (given it's external effect). Where the triangular plan might tend to close down, however, Renaudie finds volumetric solutions. In Apartment 16, for example, the living room terminates in an acute angle formed of windows which open, one to terrace, the other to a void, thereby releasing the expected tension and connecting the room with it's environment. Where the living room wall is closed, the room is lit by a triangular lantern piercing the ceiling and dividing the terraces above from each other. Each bedroom opens directly to a terrace and is accommodated in an irregular space, the surface area of which is increased in the imagination by the fact of it opening at the critical angle.

In the opening up of the acute angles, Renaudie makes spaces rather than surface area which is, in many cases, significantly less than occupants perceive it to be.[viii] His maxim *une surface n'est pas separable de l'espace* concisely encapsulates his concern to provide for the human in unpredictable movement. In this building, the rooms are not predicated exclusively on their function; there is no attempt to fully resolve the relationship between the size of a bedroom and its bed, for example, or the placement of a kitchen. He does not pretend to understand how the individual occupant will choose to inhabit the space he makes but accords him the intelligence to do so himself, successfully and in various ways, given that he is provided with a complex set of conditions. Photographs of the interiors and reports from the occupants suggest that, as the 68ers would have had it, imagination has ruled.[x]

Pleasure

In a dwelling, what matters are not just the purely functional aspects, but other things that aren't necessarily quantifiable, which one could call the abstract content – in other words experiencing pleasure and being able to act freely in space.
Jean Renaudie, *Techniques et Architecture, December 1976*

The word *onirique* does not exist in English; it is rather rendered in various ways, one of which is *dreamlike.* This does not, however, fully match the sense of there being something beyond what physically exists that both Bachelard and Renaudie alike require of the term and which, in turn, they both require of architecture. This is not as firmly at odds with the Existentialist cultural framework in which we have located Renaudie's work as we might at first imagine. Though Sartre asserts that *dreams, expectations and hopes serve to define man only as deceptive dreams, abortive hopes, expectations unfulfilled*[xi] we can perceive a perspective in which Renaudie's work might joyfully turn this around.

Man, the Existentialists tell us, is the set of relations that constitute his undertakings. What exists, rather than a set of rules governing the relation of things to each other, is a subject who is responsible for the construction, in good faith, of the world by the engagement of the body. This world he shapes by acting, moving through space and engaging the agency of perception, visual, haptic, auditory, olfactory and oral. These senses are stimulated by existing physical circumstances (colours, textures, lights, forms, smells, spaces etc.); they become meaningful, however, through our capacity to invent and imagine.

Invention is, for the Existentialists, the means by which people move forward with their lives. For Renaudie, who delighted in refusing to pre-empt peoples' actions,[xii] it is what allows the architect not to be a sociologist. It is also, I think, close to what he means by *onirique*, a quality derived from the abandonment of proscription. Thus the spaces he makes are necessarily complex but not closed; they do not have an aggressive desire to resolve themselves or the lives of those living in them. They are proud of their fabrication, but not to the point of denying the pleasure of the desire to live on, in and out of them in as many ways as their inhabitants have. As there is no one place to hang a hat, you hang it anywhere, or perhaps not at all.

Like elements in a city made by accretion, these 40 apartments rejoice in being each as singular as the people who are likely to occupy them, as singular as, in truth, we all are. How, I wonder has the family in number 22 prospered with the ambiguous delight of having three back gardens each of which is as open as the non-existent front one? What does it mean to have your flat displaced over the territory of several neighbours at once? In short, how does living in such a place feel?

In the definitive extant work on Renaudie,[xiii] Irénée Scalbert, has drawn a comparison between Jeanne Hachette and both Kowloon Walled City and the Yokohama Ferry Terminal as places that are made *on a system of pure, pertinent differences.* This is one of the promises of early postmodernism that has, I hope, yet to see its wider realization. We dwell in a world and in cities with which we can have a more fecund relationship whilst being mindful that there is no real promise of resolution, just complexity. Life might well be absurd, as Camus reminds us, but that does not mean that we cannot enjoy it. At Ivry Renaudie shows us that the restrictions of style might be overcome by wit, intelligence and regard for diversity, that there is much delight to be had in complexity, if we are willing to seek it out, and true pleasure in the knowledge that there always remains something to be won.

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i. Declared by Neitzsche, F. in Die Geist der Wissenschaft 1882; le Corbusier drowned in August, 1967. **ii** Malraux, André, La Condition Humaine, 1933; Minister for Culture under de Gaulle, 1960-1969. **iii** see Sartre, J.P., Existentialism is a Humanism 1946. **iv** Idem. **v** Frost, R., The Road not Taken, 1920: 'Two roads diverged in a wood and I, I took the one less travelled by, and that has made all the difference'.**vi** OED definition. **vii** Sartre, J.P. Nausea; a central episode to the narrative describes the existential hero's encounter with another who threatens his sphere of control. **viii** In an interview for Architecture et Construction, 1976, Renaudie firmly asserts that he has heard no accounts of dissatisfaction with the triangular plan; it seems rather that owners and tenants are surprised with the apparent spaciousness despite the limited surface area. **ix** Surface area is inseparable from space. **x** Irénée Scalbert has included in his book on Renaudie, A Right to Difference, photographs which show occupants' belongings in situ. He also refers to the slogan l'imagination au pouvoir (let the imagination rule), a popular cry of 1969. **xi** see Sartre, J.P., Existentialism is a Humanism 1946. **xii** Les hommes, je ne les connais pas (I don't know people), was another of his maxims. **xiii** Scalbert, I., A Right to Difference, 2004

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