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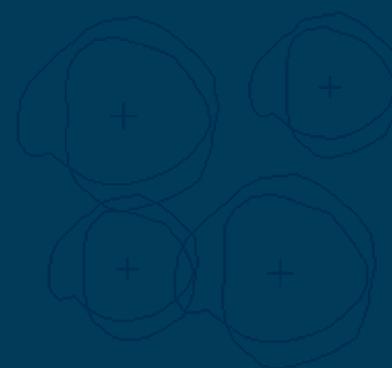
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Editorial

ORLA MURPHY

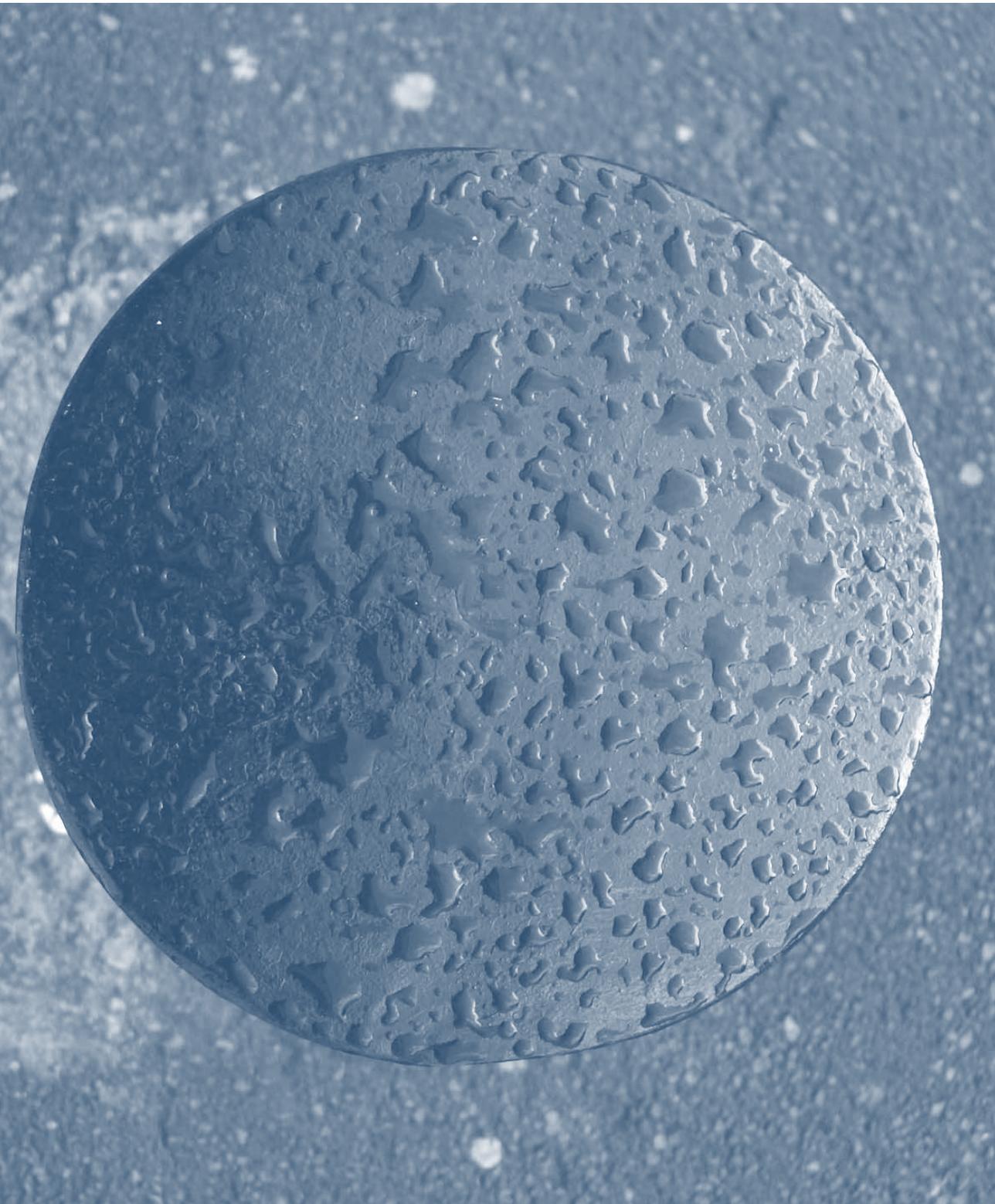
In selecting the theme global/local for this issue of *building material*, it was anticipated that many of the articles would position themselves at either end of what Jeremy Till refers to as the 'classic binary' in his essay, *Here There and North of Nowhere*. The perception is, he argues, that one viewpoint, either global or local, must necessarily be favoured over the other. The global position has come to signify homogenisation, lack of individuality and commodification, while the local is admired for its association with the hand-made, bespoke and the particular.

What is surprising about the texts contained here, however, is that global/local is representative of a far more subtle oscillation between the two ends of the scale, one of exchange as opposed to hegemony, signified more by networks and interfaces than by linear experience.

The results of these shifting views are represented, for example, in the way we might zoom out to examine the far-off, in order to take stock and assimilate precedent. The lens can then be adjusted to zoom right back in, in order to apply new lessons learnt at the scale of the familiar. That this exchange can start to function in both directions simultaneously is something that is optimistically suggested as a way in which the culture of architecture can benefit from such global/local conversations. This two-way operation is examined by Kevin Donovan in his account of the new Bocconi University building in Milan by Grafton Architects and is further explored by Gerry Cahill in his reflection on the contribution of his practice to this year's Venice Biennale. The process of critical architectural practice in both instances is of interest in the exploration of the relationship between the foreign and the familiar.

As external influences effect and shape the environment with increasing speed, we are challenged to think creatively about how we might initiate change while taking care not to cause further 'ripple-effect' problems in other parts of the world. FKLarchitects highlight a way of thinking that could be both radical and yet simple in its realisation. Their stance is premised on the inevitable but as yet unadopted acceptance that fossil fuels are finite and that engaging with the problem of energy and food production is not something we can continue to ignore.

It is no longer possible to define ourselves as solely identifiable with one geographical or political unit. Whether we like it or not, our local actions have physical, cultural and political effects at the global scale. The essays contained in this issue point to ways in which this challenge reveals a potential for rich and creative thinking and working - one that can shift between scales and in doing so enrich the lives of people locally and globally.





1

SoReal Modernism

JENNIFER BOYER

In the past few years, a number of international publications have emerged highlighting some of the buildings designed and built during the 1960's and 70's in Slovakia. These buildings, associated with the SoReal (Socialist Realism) movement, have been largely unknown to designers around the world until recently. Glossy international magazines like Wallpaper*, Surface and Vogue Interiors flash seductive black and white imagery of buildings long ignored and uncared for by their cities, with the aim of generating a new design destination and fashion icon. One publication, A10 even goes so far as to highlight a fashionably modern 'unknown' building each month in a section called Out of Obscurity. Another more in-depth publication called Eastmoderni, tells the story of these unknown buildings through the eyes of the architects some 40 years on. What is the agenda of these international publications that promote these buildings 40 and 50 years since their completion using only minimal, chic, stylised images? Recently, in our office in Bratislava, a debate over the use of travertine cladding and the local historical connotations of that material in a new building design led me to wonder about the differences between the international perception of socialist buildings versus the local opinion of people who have lived in, worked on, and grown up with these buildings. Through a series of interviews with local architects in Bratislava, ranging in age from 28 to 69, some interesting observations can be made about the disjunction between global (international) and local (national) opinions on what constitutes architectural importance.

Maria Majdakova

Born 1980, Graduated Slovak Technical University, Faculty of Architecture, Bratislava 2006.

Architect, Murray O'Laire Architects, s.r.o.

JB What do you think of the Tesco building (the building most people refer to as the Prior Department Store)?

MM I like it. It was the first real shopping centre in Bratislava. I have fond memories of it as a child. I used to love playing with the new toys in the toy section. Today the surroundings are not so great, the streetscape in particular makes it difficult for pedestrians. The hotel [Kiev], which was a part of the complex, is still open but it is quite run down. No one is taking care of these buildings.

JB Do you think the Tesco and Hotel Kiev buildings should be preserved?

MM Yes, because I think they have local importance. They are also unique buildings simply because of their scale. They are so much bigger than their context, than most of Bratislava. They are representative of the style of architecture at that time and preserve a memory of that era.

JB The buildings we are discussing have been referred to as many things, grand gestures, monuments, expressive abstract forms, acrobatics of the masses, and so on. Do you think people needed architecture at that time to make itself known through its massiveness, which translated as a symbol for the good of the greater public?

MM Not necessarily for the 'greater good'. These buildings were more a symbol of our identity and putting ourselves on the map of the world, especially the west. I think the feeling at the time was more like, why not? Why not make it a big building? Today every square meter is precious. At that time no one cared about the costs. Many of the SoReal buildings were expressive through their large forms.

JB What do you see as the latest in architectural trends in Slovakia?

MM Copy paste international style as I call it. As high as possible and as cheap as possible

are also widely known styles here. Ireland has a unique style of architecture, dark stone, generally low rise; that is what makes it a unique country to visit.

JB Do you think that Slovakia has benefited from large international architectural practices building projects here?

MM International practices are a good thing. They represent 'big Europe' where everything is connected. The new interconnections available to Slovakia after joining the EU are reflected in the architectural trend for architects to travel and build all over. They are direct results of one another.

JB Are you concerned that architecture of this kind acts as a global brand or product? Do you think it has the potential to erode the unique culture here? Similar to the way fashion brands can be found in every major European city?

MM You can copy things as much as you like, but every time you place the product, a building in this case, into a new culture, the culture will have an affect on it. So it will never feel like the original. Local conditions will always affect a project.



Alexandra Ondrikova

*Born 1976, Graduated Slovak Technical University, Faculty of Architecture, Bratislava 2002
Senior Architect, Murray O'Laoire Architects s.r.o.*

JB What do you think of the Tesco building?

AO I know I am suppose to like it as an architect, but I never have. It is out of scale with everything else around it. Also, it doesn't stand alone in its own space. I find it difficult to read because the buildings around it are too close, so you only get fragments. Even the name of it connotes socialist times, when the only available stores in Bratislava were Prior brand stores. I cannot disassociate the architecture with the limit of freedoms at that time. I remember seeing the building published in A10 magazine in May 2007. I feel like after that recognition people have been coerced in to thinking it is a cool modernist masterpiece. However, the National Gallery building I like.

JB What about it do you like?

AO The spaces inside mostly. There are a series of interconnected gallery levels overlooking one another. The gallery spaces step in with the façade but the overlap allows you to view down to the level below. Did you know the exterior to the riverfront used to be all red? I don't know why they changed it. It is compromised now. The idea of a bold red façade facing the river wasn't meant to be compromised. It was the attraction of the riverfront, a big bold statement.

JB Do you know what the Conservation Authority's objectives are for modern buildings of architectural importance?

AO In the Old Town, the conservation requirements are very strict and it can be difficult to build. The authority has set out particular zones that are sensitive, but these zones do not include many 20th century buildings. For instance

Hotel Kiev and several other buildings in the immediate area of Tesco have significant architectural importance. There is the first 'skyscraper' called Manderlák in Bratislava (an 11 story concrete residential building) from 1935, next to that the first example of a curtain wall building in Slovakia is also from the 1930's. The Hotel Kiev building demonstrated one of the most ambitious structural cantilevers of its time in the 1970's. And so because of these historic architectural achievements these buildings are valued, but not necessarily protected.

JB Do you think any of the buildings from that era should be preserved?

AO I think the Nový Most should be preserved. It is one of my favourite places in all of Bratislava.

JB What about the old town which was destroyed as a part of its construction?

AO I know, it is a difficult question to answer as an architect. On the one hand, ignoring history I enjoy it on a purely architectural basis. But contextually it is wrong.

JB What do you think about architecture today in Bratislava? How does it compare with the architecture and architects back in the 60's and 70's?

AO The architects of the Stavoprojekt generation developed 5 year plans and worked to fulfill these plans for the 'greater good'. They were building the new state because there was a lot of public money at that time, private investment did not exist. At the end of the 5 years they would reflect and evaluate whether they have achieved their goals. It was a very different way of working from today.

Igor Palčo

Born 1967, Academy of Fine Arts & Design, School of Architecture, Bratislava 1992
Principle, Igor Palčo, s.r.o.

JB What do you think of the Tesco building?

IP It is more of a monument than architecture. It was the right building for that time, it represented one of the first commercial buildings of that time, but not commercial in the way we use the word today. The building was designed very specifically for the Prior department store and it has not been able to adapt to the new commercial needs of today. It is unfortunate that the external facades have been covered in large advertisements. The city should contribute money to completing the square and spaces around it, but at the moment there is no plan to.

JB Some people say that the building represented the notion that the 'greater public good' was being served through the architecture and its grand gesture.

IP The building was designed as a monument, not for the 'greater good' of the people. Matušík (the architect of the Tesco building) was 29 years old when he won the competition, young and with big ambitions for himself. Buildings like this one demonstrated the capability of our people. It was more like pride for our country. I remember there were raffles for people from the countryside to come and stay in the new hotels in Bratislava to how good life could be.

JB You worked with the Slovak architect Ján Bahna. How do you compare the work he did back in the 1970's to buildings he has done recently?

IP In his earlier years Bahna worked on many shopping centres. In fact, he was the first to design the prototype store for the Prior group. The design of shopping centres back then

focused more of the shop itself rather than the context around it. I think that can clearly be seen in Matušík's work on the Tesco building. Also back then, the materials used were the ones that were available. We were lucky that stone was in abundance, and therefore it was used on almost every façade at that time. One exception is the Trade Union House, which was clad in a grey marble imported from Cuba. The socialist countries all worked together back then.

JB The Tesco building complex has many fine stone details, both externally and internally. Do you think that this building should be preserved?

IP It is only a shopping centre; it has no real value. I would be in favour of a new building on that site provided it was better than what is currently there. I do think though that architecture has become very commercialised. There is very little architecture built that is for the public, by that I mean free.

JB The urban fabric of Bratislava has changed quite a lot in the last 35 years and continues to do so. Do you think Bratislava benefits from large international practice building projects here?

IP We can learn from big projects and big name architects building here. I think we need them in order to create an international and European wide identity. When I was studying architecture, and when Bahna and the others were before me there was a lack in the ability for us to travel. The last period of architects with good international exposure to other countries was back in the 1930's. We need to regain the ground we have lost, and bringing

international architects here is one way to do that. To me Slovak identity is not as important as European identity. To me commercialism has changed our view. Instead of focusing on war, people are focusing on making money. I think this is more positive and productive.

JB Many trendy publications today tout these buildings as hip and retro chic. What do you think about these buildings being the new cool?

IP I am not into retro. Our job as architects is to make new things. I am an architect and therefore an optimist. You have to try to make new things at least!



Prior Store and Kyjev Hotel, Bratislava, Ivan Matušík, 1968–1973

SLOVAKIA — TEXT: MARIJA TUREČANSKA, PHOTOGRAPHY: NERITIA HUBAŠOVÁ

One of Bratislava's most arresting (but unloved) architectural works of the 1960s and '70s is threatened with demolition, adding to the concern of a group of architects who are actively trying to raise public awareness about what they see as another critical mistake in the city centre.

The building was the result of a 1960 competition for a site on Kamené námestie (the Square) left vacant by large-scale demolition. The competition was won by Ivan Matušík (1901) who designed the Prior Store (1968) — today a Tesco supermarket — and the Kyjev Hotel (1973) as an inseparable pair of buildings. The Prior, built on an equilateral triangle plot, incorporated formal, typological and structural solutions unseen in Czechoslovakia at the time of its creation. The adjacent high-rise hotel, with its long horizontal base, is less original but very material in conception, evoking memories of Arne Jacobsen's SAS Royal Hotel in Copenhagen (1960). The most thoughtful solutions, like the gracefully cut white travertine cladding of facades, demonstrate that the store and the hotel are above all forceful showcases of total art realized under state-controlled industrialized production that was far from sympathetic to quality craftsmanship. If the original know-how required to generate such a concept, and careful attention to detail was borrowed from Jacobsen, Matušík's virtue has been to stay this approach and apply it consistently from the 1960s to the present day.

While some late modern examples of the International Style in Bratislava have already earned heritage listing, other buildings have failed to capture the interest of the media and general public and therefore remain at constant risk. In a city where the often-proclaimed goal for continuity of architectural development is an illusion and the 'prettiness' on sale is a veil for the poor quality of many recent interventions, this pair of austere buildings was

allowed to stagnate. The department store underwent internal alterations to the layout and technical systems and the purity of its almost windowless travertine facade with characteristic large clock has been marred by advertising. However, much of the furniture and a large part of the integrated design of the hotel rooms and bars have remained unchanged.

With the threat of demolition hanging over them, the Prior Store and the Kyjev Hotel have received more media attention than they have ever had, thanks to the local do-it-yourself group that continues to be outspoken and to hold public hearings in favour of the preservation of this late modern fragment of Bratislava.

According to an extensive survey of architecture dating from the second half of the 20th century, conducted by do-it-yourself Slovakia, Bratislava has an impressive collection of late modern architecture. Unfortunately, it is burdened with the negative political associations of historical moment, so-called 'socialism'. It consequently receives far less recognition than its architecture. It is quite simply a difficult sell. Because the Prior Store and Kyjev Hotel are challenging buildings in this respect, there is no wide public support for their preservation. Nor do it help their case that the pair never managed to 'get along' with their neighbours; the buildings were designed as though they were a group of outdoor sculptures. They represent a key event in city development, rather than providing spatial or historical continuity. This was indeed one of the large urban ruptures and architectural milestones in Bratislava and the complex speaks truly of its moment. In its day, the construction of the Prior Store and the Kyjev Hotel on Kamené Square was a big-hearted gesture that allowed local contemporary architecture to cross political borders and share the values of the wider European context; its demolition would be a faint-hearted act of narrow-mindedness. ■

Out of obscurity

Buildings from the renaissance of modern history



Branislav Kaliský

Born 1968, Graduated Slovak Technical University, Faculty of Architecture, Bratislava 1994 Graduated Hochschule Fur Angewandte Kunst, Vienna 1995 Managing Director, A1 ReSpec Architects s.r.o

JB What do you think of the Tesco building?

BK From an architectural point of view I don't like it. But its importance as a monument that represented the power of the communist time was quite significant.

JB Do you think the Tesco and Hotel Kiev buildings should be preserved?

BK I think that they will inevitably be torn down. I would like a fragment of them to be left, as a piece of memory. Buildings are generally more efficient now, and the ability to maintain heating and cooling inside is difficult and expensive. I have fond memories of the Trade Union House, it was truly a public building. It was a cultural centre with cinemas, art shows, shopping and cafes.

JB Do you think optimism is expressed in these buildings given the political context in which they were designed and built?

BK The late 1940's and 50's were optimistic times, but communism was generally not optimistic. I think these buildings are the expression of the competitive spirit of that time, East vs. West. We were competing in many professions, medicine, space travel, as well as architecture and design. Americans built the skyscraper, Slovakia built the UFO Bridge. We proved that we too could create interesting icons that showed our greatness.

JB Bratislava has always been criticised for lacking a long term vision about itself and its growth, do you think this is still the case?

BK A long-term vision is very difficult for the city here to maintain because it is directly tied to politics. The 4-year term of office is too short to ensure that a vision is carried through at a large scale. Regardless, much of the difficulty in implementing a masterplan for the city is due to land ownership issues. Since the privatisation of land back in the early 1990's, fast and comprehensive privatisation served as one of the four pillars of the reform and was understood not only as an economic phenomenon, but also an important part of the political changes - a guarantee of their irreversibility. Since then, the city has had to work independently with land owners/ developers in the planning process. Previously, when most land was government owned creating and securing and implementing grand visions was a more simple process.

JB Will it take large international practices coming in for people to pay attention?

BK I think that these types of architects should pay attention to the genius loci more. Although their projects are internationally recognisable, they lack a proximity to location and local importance. No, I don't think they will change the ways here.

1

Štefan Šlachta

Born 1939, Graduated Slovak Technical University, Faculty of Architecture, Bratislava 1962
City Architect of Bratislava, President of the Society of Slovak Architects

JB As City Architect you must have some strong opinions about the buildings designed and built in the 1960's and 70's such as the Prior Department Store and the National Gallery?

SS The 70's and 80's were not a time of favourable architecture in Slovakia. During the 1960's our liberal attitudes were reflected in the buildings produced - the client for many of the buildings was the state. The budgets were endless, meanwhile the people of Bratislava were all being moved out of the old city into inexpensively made concrete panel block high rise housing. In the early 70's, all the liberal faculty were removed and the Slovak Architectural Society became a servant to the Ministry of Construction and the building industry, whereas previously it had been situated under the Ministry of Culture. The most interesting architectural times in my opinion were during the 1930's between the two World Wars. Czech cubism and the Arts and Crafts/Succession movements were finishing. The buildings of this time were very modern and represented the democratic era (one which would not return until 1989). Because of this, they were considered buildings of the Bourgeoisie and therefore capitalist architecture, so these projects were never published.

JB Do you have a sense as to whether these buildings are appreciated by the public today?

SS For many years these buildings have been in poor condition. Only recently, through extensive refurbishment have people been able to see their beauty as it once was. A short time ago the national heritage groups did not

consider modern buildings as apart of their duties. Previously they were only interested in preserving the Baroque and Romanesque buildings in the city. In 1990, I organised the first conference here for the protection of modern architecture. Subsequently in 1996, Slovakia became member of the DoCoMoMo organisation, which works to preserve and document the construction and rehabilitation of buildings from the modern movement.

JB So, going back to one of my earlier questions, do you think that buildings like the Prior Department store and the National Gallery should be preserved?

SS The Prior building is controversial. It was executed in the true International Style. It ignored its context and it was seen as a temple of consumerism. I personally think that a competition should be held for a new function, other than shopping, on this site. An urban solution should be found that would unite all of the fragments in the vicinity. The National Gallery, in my mind, was never a good concept. The archives are on the lowest levels, which will be damaged in the event of flooding. The orientation of the glazing at the upper levels creates too much heat in the gallery spaces, which is problematic for preserving the works of art. Originally the building was designed to be clad in stone. But a combination of the 75m meter steel spans (which naturally flex) and the sloping south elevation, meant that the cladding elements could have fallen off and injured pedestrians below.... luckily this was changed.

JB The buildings you speak of have been highlighted recently in international publications and media, which promote their uniqueness and preservation.

SS I think the younger generations like these buildings because of their big gestures.

JB What plans are there now for Bratislava in terms of future development and architecture?

SS Well, previously no one had ever imagined that the border between Slovakia and the EU would disappear. So, we are looking now at how to redefine the border between Austria and Bratislava. Previously all Slovak development faced the highway, towards Slovakia. Now we

are looking to expand development, which will take advantage of and re-establish the beautiful natural deltas stemming from the Danube towards Austria.

JB Lastly, what is your opinion on larger international practices working in Bratislava?

SS There are always exceptions, but generally I think a number of the large projects designed by international practices to date have been very successful. Good international practices bring with them good quality architecture. They also tend to employ and collaborate with local Slovak architects, which helps to raise our level of design and delivery. This sort of collaboration is very positive.

With the proliferation of media, books, magazines, and websites, the image of a building becomes all important, leaving the subtext and the context of the image erased. Younger generations are more susceptible to a global populist opinion in line with the media due to their increased exposure and because they have only a vicarious understanding of the original context in which the building was designed. Many of the younger people I spoke with were in support of preserving these buildings. Is this because the buildings had now reached an international audience and thereby had gained importance architecturally? Or perhaps the further away in time one is from building, the more precious it becomes. In contrast, the older generations I spoke with were more inclined to reinvent the buildings or to allow them to be taken down in hope of something better. The restrictions on travel and the limitations on media, which this generation was exposed to, give us an insight into the real context in which these buildings were built. The older generation holds a richer understanding of these buildings, perhaps greater than the contemporary media and its short attention span can describe. For them, the importance these buildings hold is not one that forces them to protect and preserve the architecture forever. Buildings promoted and publicised by the international media, and their customary dependence on image over content, can lead to a shallow understanding of architectural meanings and can affect their local existence and continued vitality.

Jennifer Boyer was born in Chicago, USA and studied architecture at Cornell University. Director of Murray O'Laoire Architects, s.r.o., Bratislava since 2007, she has been an Irish resident since 2001.

ⁱ Hurna, Hertha, Benjamin Konrad, Maik Novotny, 'Eastmodern: Architecture and Design of the 1960's and 1970's in Slovakia'. Springer-Verlag, Wien Austria 2007



2

Here, There and North of Nowhere

JEREMY TILL

Global/local is a classic binary, with all the problems associated with binary thinking. One half of the pair is seen to be dominant – for example the Cartesian mind – leaving the other half – the body – suppressed. In the global/local pairing it is the global that is accepted as in the ascendant leaving the local overwhelmed and continually under threat. And so sides are taken, the underdog is championed and much effort put into defining its special status. However, this focus on the suppressed leaves the other half unscathed because all the critical attention is not on the structures and potential fault lines of the dominant, but on the restitution of the values of the 'other'. There is a sense of retreat away from the suppressor to a place of sanctuary, around which walls are erected against the raging forces beyond. And with this retreat there is a concomitant feeling of hopelessness, an inevitability of failure because not only has the dominant half been left untouched, but worse, the minor pair is still framed within the major's ideological structure.

This is the inexorable logic of the binary and its dialectical structure, one force set in opposition to another. Start with the strong (global) and posit, and then champion, its weaker half (the local). The homogenisation of the urban realm is bad: therefore introduce heterogeneity. The saturation of the instant is prevalent: ergo go slow. The visual realm is privileged: restore the tactile. Abstract space: grounded place. Universal technique: vernacular craft. Opposites proliferate, but they are always in reaction to the dominant, and thus either in the thrall of it or in retreat from it. Resistance is claimed, but it is really no more effective than a boxer exhausting himself against the swinging mass of the punch bag.

All of which is by way of introducing the hopelessness of the most famous of all architectural commentaries on the global/local, namely Kenneth Frampton's *Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six points for an architecture of resistance*.¹ Frampton is enough a reader of the Frankfurt School to enact a dialectical movement between 'universal civilisation' on the one, bad, hand and 'critical regionalism' on the other, redemptive, hand. But he is not enough of a follower of the Frankfurt School to situate the dialectic in the political and social life-world. Thus the resistance of the title of the essay is provided by architecture as object, as opposed by architecture as the setting and catalyst for social life. It is a resistance that 'may find its governing inspiration in such things as the range and quality of the local light, or in a *tectonic* derived from a peculiar structural mode, or in the topography of a given site.' These qualities of architecture are all associated with the phenomenal reception of space and whilst a phenomenological reading of architecture is not necessarily incompatible with a social one (as Lefebvre shows so cogently), Frampton's argument remains firmly within the aesthetics and, especially, tectonics of architecture qua object. The key term, in Frampton's italics, is 'tectonic', and it is worth quoting at some length how he defines this term, and how he begins to see it an agent of resistance:

The primary principle of the autonomy of architecture resides in the tectonic rather than the scenographic: that is to say this autonomy is embodied in the revealed ligaments of the construction and in the way in which the syntactical form of the structure explicitly reveals the action of gravity. ... The tactile and the tectonic jointly have the capacity to transcend the mere appearance of the technical in much the same way as the place-form has the potential to withstand the relentless onslaught of global modernism.



Encounters Shops				
LOCATION: SHARROW, SHEFFIELD				
THE PROCESS				
SPECIAL OFFERS	CUSTOMER RESPONSE	SHOP DISPLAY	SAMPLES	END TOTALS
Leave your fingerprints and voice at birth				41 Fingerprints
Have your UNIQ saved and please give us something from your shop for our shop?				59 UNIQ items Shopkeepers
Use the clock to answer the questions left on the blackboard				10 Questions and 154 Answers
Take us to a place here where you think we might find something that somebody has lost				264 Maplets found
Make a photo book or collage out things that attract you from the photographs on the table				155 photo books
Show us a common patch of ground that is neglected and full of life				546 pieces of life collected and shared
Use the luggage label to mark on the map the journey you have made to see in Sheffield				53 Journays
Find a place on the map of Sharrow that has meaning for you and have a personal story about it				185 personal stories
Please return to Encounters shop				30 returnees shared

In later text he makes the resistive potential of tectonics in relation to global capital still clearer:

For all its marginality, tectonic culture still possesses a vestigially resistant core, particularly as this is manifest in its proclivity for the tactile. This dimension resists the maximising thrust of capitalism, determined now, as never before, on the process of global commodification.ⁱⁱ

Now is it just me, or isn't the idea that the effects of global capital and universal civilisation are going to be resisted through a tectonic revealing the honesty of its construction really rather bathetic – in the sense of the word as the anticlimax that one senses when what one has seen as trivial turns out in fact to be trivial. Well, it must be me, because Frampton's call to ordered arms, his *Rappel A L'Ordre*ⁱⁱⁱ, is held in such veneration in architectural circles.^{iv} He provides a comfort zone for architects in which to exert their expertise. Whilst other matters (users, time, taste) are beyond our control, we still – just – hold sway over the way that buildings may artfully be put together, over material matters. And if Frampton tells us that this activity in all its rectitude serves a local purpose against the onslaught of global modernism, and if (still more insidiously) Mies tells us that it assumes some kind of higher moral purpose ('God lies in the details'), then so much the better.^v

This is not to dismiss out of hand the making of buildings as a respectable occupation; I enjoy admiring the 'good' detail as much as the next architect, which is probably excessively more than the average punter for whom the shadow gap is somewhere dirt collects rather than a place of near spiritual necessity. But it is to argue that our aesthetic and technical twiddlings – whilst the world burns - are accorded a reverence, and association with resistance, that they simply do not deserve. Holding to the hope of redemption through tectonics is only tenable under a belief system that posits the "autonomy of architecture". As soon as one situates, as one must, architecture - as both practice and product - within the social life-world, then that hope crumbles in the face of dirty reality.

It is therefore necessary to employ other tactics beyond the restitution of an aesthetic or tectonic identity in order to address the dynamics of the global and local. First off is to dissolve the rigid binary of global/local or rather, according to Zygmunt Bauman's compelling analysis of contemporary life, to see us in state of "liquid modernity", in which traditional categories merge and the global/local are characterised in a much more complex, uncertain and turbulent relationship than the simplistic dialectic ever allows.^{vi} It is a liquidity that washes away the identification of the global as necessarily bad (though Bauman is trenchant in his critique of the worst effects of globalisation)^{vii}, and the local as unremittingly good. It is a liquidity which demands that we are aware of the tensions that exist across all scales and does not allow us to retreat behind the false hope of barriers erected against the tide of global domination. The point is beautifully made by Bruno Latour who argues that, faced with the confusion of the contemporary labyrinth:

...there is an Ariadne's thread that would allow us to pass with continuity from the local to the global, from the human to the nonhuman. It is the thread of networks of practices and instruments, of documents and translations...the two extremes, local and global, are much less interesting than the intermediary arrangements that we are calling networks.

The important term here is networks, which suggests a set of negotiations between the extremes. This is different from the now commonplace term the 'glocal', which implies an uncritical and inevitable hybridisation of the two. The rallying call of the glocal ('think global, act local') is in the end despairing in its ordering of its terms, in which the intellectual and social conditions of the global overwhelm the simple action of the local. Latour's networks imply that there is such a thing as local knowledge, but that this needs to be played out in a context in which strict modernist categories and divisions are dissolved.

In a modest way this was what we were trying to achieve in our exhibition for the British Pavilion at the 2006 Venice Architecture Biennale.^x The aim of Echo/City was to present a city, Sheffield, that is great almost despite its architecture. It is a city that invokes an extraordinary sense of loyalty from its citizens (and in this has a bedrock of local identity) and at the same time has been buffeted by global forces (most tellingly in the way that its steelworks have passed from British to Dutch to Finnish to Indian ownership in the space of fifteen years.) Our simple idea was to document Sheffield across a range of scales 1:1, 1:100, 1:10,000, 1:10,000,000, an 'urban register' that exposed the city beyond the architectural comfort zone (which I would put at 1:100, a scale just big enough to pretend that what one is drawing is real but just small enough not to have to confront reality).

Our key move was to understand these scales as both topographical *and* social; they are thus suggestive of one's relationship with numbers of others, from the intimacy of the one-on-one to the anonymity of being lost in global networks. In their concentration on the 1:100 (the composition and making of buildings) architects tend to eschew the dynamics of the other scales and the rich interplay across them. Their main loss is an understanding of buildings and the places between them as the settings for the social and political life. We therefore introduced human experience as the common thread of our urban register, taking the role of people in the understanding and making of cities as a central concern, and confronting architecture's tendency to abstract the human, the social and the political.

To this end each scale had a subtitle that reinforced the interplay between social and physical:

1:1 More than just a detail
 1:100 One architect to one hundred citizens
 1:10,000 These are stories not streets
 1:10,000,000 Here, There, and North of Nowhere

One encountered the scales in no particular order. For the purposes of this issue of *building material*, perhaps the most poignant moment was the threshold between the 1:1 and the 1:10,000,000 rooms. In the former visitors to the exhibition were covering the walls with their take on the most local scale of the city, whilst through the door was a soundscape and animation of Sheffield's relationship to the global, depicting the city's outward diaspora and inward magnet.^{xi} Standing in the threshold one felt both the connection and the difference between these two scales.

The phrase *Here, There, and North of Nowhere* is the way that Ian Anderson of The Designers Republic describes Sheffield. It is here, grounded in its own sense and identity, it is out there traversing the global

networks and it is definitely north of nowhere (a reference dismissing the patronising associations of the North of England with something rather secondary). It is a phrase that indicates that global/local is not an either/or but a both /and, and that if cities like Sheffield can survive that apparent paradox, then so can others. It is a challenge to architects to open up their radar to a wider set of issues than merely the aesthetic and tectonic, and instead follow the Ariadne's thread through the urban register with all its social, political and physical connotations. Only then can we possibly invoke the word 'critical' that Frampton introduces but never fulfils.

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- i Kenneth Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: six points for an architecture of resistance," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1983). Frampton acknowledges his debt to Tzonis and Lefaivre for the invention of the term 'critical regionalism' in their article 'The grid and pathway', *Architecture in Greece*, 15, Athens, 1981, p. 178
- ii Kenneth Frampton, *Studies in Tectonic Culture: the poetics of construction in nineteenth and twentieth century architecture* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1995), p. 377.
- iii Kenneth Frampton, "Rappel a l'ordre, The Case for the Tectonic", Kate Nesbitt, editor, *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture, An Anthology of Architectural Theory 1965-1995*, (Princeton, Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), p. 522.
- iv Well me and Sola Morales, who notes in relation to Frampton: "I believe it is naïve to accept at the same time the viability of certain tectonic categories that can only be intelligible within the order of the old political urban culture of the classical age. ...a phenomenologically ingenuous restoration that reveals little or no sense of the contemporary crisis." Ignasi de Solà-Morales, *Differences: topographies of contemporary architecture*, trans. Graham Thompson (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1997), p. 63.. Or maybe me, Sola Morales and Banham, the latter who dismisses the notion of resistance as "self-righteous cant of New York academe represented by Kenneth Frampton." Reyner Banham, "A Black Box: the secret profession of architecture," in *A Critic Writes*, ed. Mary Banham (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 298.
- v This argument is developed in Jeremy Till and Sarah Wigglesworth, "The Future is Hairy," in *Architecture : the subject is matter*, ed. Jonathan Hill (London; New York: Routledge, 2001).
- vi Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997)..
- vii Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization: the human consequences* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998).
- viii Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p. 121.
- ix The term 'local knowledge' comes from Clifford Geertz, who writes: "Like gardening, politics, and poetry, law and ethnography are crafts of place: they work by the light of local knowledge. Whatever else anthropology and jurisprudence may have in common, they are alike absorbed with the artisan task of seeing broad principles in parochial facts. 'Wisdom', as an African proverb has it, 'comes out of an ant heap.'" There is no reason not to add architecture to his list of disciplines. Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge* (London: Fontana, 1983), p. 169.
- x The team which I coordinated for the pavilion was, in alphabetical order: Ian Anderson, Ruth Ben-Tovim, Tim Etchells, Hugo Glendinning, Trish O'Shea, Jim Prevett, Jeremy Till, Martyn Ware and Sarah Wigglesworth. The catalogue is available through Cornerhouse: Jeremy Till, *Echo/City: An Urban Register* (London: The British Council, 2006).
- xi A fuzzy version of this animation/soundscape can be found on YouTube. Search for 'magnet diaspora ware'. The designers were Martyn Ware (soundscape) and Malcolm Garrett (animation).

Living in a white elephant – Jianwai Soho, Beijing

ROLAND BOSBACH

The city and context.

The recent Beijing Olympic Games, with their ambitious infrastructure and iconic architecture in tandem with the ongoing destruction of Beijing's traditional Hutong areas, have focused much of the international attention and shaped its perception of Beijing's changing urban fabric. But the city's transformation over the last two decades has been most radical and conclusive in the redevelopment and densification of former industrial and residential low rise neighbourhoods into a high rise Metropolis and the growing suburbanisation of its agricultural hinterland with exclusive gated villa compounds. This is where the social and economic transformations of the city are at their most dynamic, with vast new business districts reflecting China's economic ambitions. The continuing urbanisation of China's population pumping vast numbers of new inhabitants into the city and the growing demands of new Chinese middle class for property investment and 'western lifestyle' are creating an entirely new urban and social fabric in Beijing and all major Chinese cities.

Until the early 1950s, Beijing was still characterised by its low-rise, homogenous urban fabric, grown over centuries with the traditional Hutong, a walled courtyard typology, at its core and with multiple layers, in a three tiered way of house-compound-city, making up its complex introverted urban fabric. With the foundation of the People's Republic came the first wave of industrialisation, formulated in the General Plans of the 1950s and 1960s under Soviet guidance, with a radical urbanisation of its population triggering both densification of the traditional Hutong areas and large-scale restructuring and extension of its urban fabric with new factories and associated mass housing for the workers. The death of Mao in 1976 and the changing political climate allowed for a short period of critical reflection and proposals for a more sensitive urban regeneration, but with the opening of the Chinese economy in the 1980s and the resulting building boom, the restructuring of Beijing stepped onto

a new level. With capitalism as the new ideal, the transformation of the city had shifted from the state controlled, egalitarian principles of the communist era to the short-cycled fashion of capital-driven property developers.

The central area of today's Beijing is characterised by five ring roads marking a territory of circa 2200 km² and accommodating an estimated population of 14 million. With the Forbidden City at the centre and its wall forming the first ring, the Second Ring Road follows the outline of the former city wall and defines the historic inner core with its threatened Hutong fabric. The Third and Fourth Ring Road accommodated most of the industrial development and associated housing of the early People's Republic and is today Beijing's urban motor with its prestigious Central Business District, new "western style" high-rise housing developments and the Olympic Park. The Fifth Ring Road defines the sprawling territory of Beijing's secret population, the estimated five million migrant workers, while the Sixth Ring Road in contrast connects Beijing's outer suburbs with its exclusive lush villa compounds.

In its strive to emulate the west in economic power and standard of living, much of the recent housing developments have opted for the imagery and allure of western lifestyle, to accommodate the growing social and economic aspirations of the city's middle class and its seemingly insatiable demand for property investment. Their marketing spin ranges from the bizarre (the Home of Tycoons), to the romantic (French Baroque castles and associated vineyards), to the modern (in German style). The often massive scale of these developments, their popularity and growing presence in the new Beijing poses a series of questions. What kind of city do these developments create? Do they integrate with the daily reality of Chinese urban society? Do they reflect the social and economic transformation of China's urban population and preview the new emerging fabric of a Chinese Metropolis?



3

Jianwai SOHO.

Jianwai SOHO, a large mixed-use development in Beijing's Central Business District, at the junction of the Third Ring Road and the central East-West Axis, is a literal white elephant with its striking cluster of almost identical white towers rising into the grey sky over Beijing. Designed by the Japanese Architect Riken Yamamoto and developed by SOHO China, the real estate company that has also engaged international architects like MVRDV, Zaha Hadid, Lab Architecture Studio and a number of Asian architects like Shigeru Ban, Yung Ho Chang and Kengo Kuma, it stands out as one of the most successful developments, providing innovative and architecturally ambitious projects within the restless transformation of Beijing's urban fabric. Intended as a city within the city, Jianwai SOHO combines high-rise residential and commercial buildings on a retail base with shops and restaurants grounded on a multilayered landscaped public space and basement car parking. The master plan for Jianwai SOHO achieves a density of 160 dwelling units per hectare, replacing a 1950s steel factory and densifying a former industrial and residential low-rise neighbourhood into a high-rise, high-density, mixed-use development. Built in seven phases from 2002 and completed in 2006 it accommodates more than 700,000 m² of floor space and 2,110 dwelling units. Like most projects developed by SOHO China, Jianwai SOHO targets an affluent and ambitious group of Beijing residents, the new middle class and young entrepreneurs that energise and carry the economy with their hunger for property investment and business ventures. Understanding the demand of their target market for the imagery of western lifestyle and pushing the concept of Soho units, meaning small office, home-office or live + work units, to a new level have been the main reasons for SOHO China's economic success. Unlike many other recent residential developments that target the new Chinese middle class with suburban 'lifestyle' developments and gated communities, Jianwai SOHO's marketing strategy promotes a metropolitan theme that combines the status and prestige of success with modern architecture, an urban lifestyle with all associated services, entertainment and work opportunities pooled to a new urban playground. Jianwai SOHO's extensive marketing has triggered a wave of similar themed, mixed-use, mostly high-rise developments that are no longer limited to the Central Business District but have become the latest blueprint for Beijing's urban transformation.

On first encounter Jianwai SOHO, with its constrained design of white grids, seems alien to the chaos of the surrounding city, a white paradise, a brave new world. Yamamoto's vision was a new permeable urban landscape from which the residential towers of varying height but restrained and homogenous facades can rise. Separating vehicular and pedestrian movement in visually connected layers, with the underground parking pierced by sunken gardens and people moving through a landscaped ground plane where towers alternate with free-standing villas, the masterplan achieves a visually exciting rhythm of open spaces and levels. It breaks with the traditional north-south orientation of Chinese residential developments by tilting its orthogonal grid by 25 degrees off the north-south axis to maximise the tower's sun exposure and bring daylight into all parts of the complex. The cluster of 18 towers, ranging from 16 to 34 storeys, sits on a three-storey plinth of retail and service, and are directly accessed by generous multi-storey lobbies on ground floor and connected both to the landscaped public space and the parking below ground.

Riken Yamamoto's master plan and the design of Jianwai SOHO introduced innovation and 'foreign' concepts of urban design and housing to the rather traditional property market. While most foreign architects are hired to add a premium to the property value by providing the added prestige and standards of international expertise, their designs are rarely allowed to go beyond the façade treatment of already set urban formations predefined by the strict Chinese building codes. Jianwai SOHO is a notable exception with an innovative master plan followed through with an ambitious architecture. But it also highlights the potential conflicts of imported housing or 'lifestyle' models in the context of a traditionally conservative Chinese society in total flux.

Flexibility – constant flux.

Beijing, like most Chinese cities, has seen a domestic boom in residential property that goes beyond western comprehension. With property being one of the two options for the new middle-class to invest their wealth, traditional market forces of supply and demand have been suspended. This has led to an enormous over-supply of residential property with many investors having several, mostly vacant properties. Jianwai SOHO is no exception with all

environment, the mere opportunity for potential business is enough to get young entrepreneurs excited and a myriad of retail models ranging from dental clinics and luxury car service to western style restaurants and fashion boutiques opened overnight and closed almost as quickly. But with other potential shop owners already in the waiting there was no shortage of the standard bamboo arrangement, the typical Chinese symbol for an opening ceremony, anywhere in Jianwai SOHO. The management of SOHO China did their own share with arranged concerts, celebrity shows, lifestyle-magazine launches, advertising shoots, food sampling and other events to promote the image of the new urban playground. But, without the substance of permanent residential tenants, all these efforts seemed orchestrated and failed to produce the services associated with an urban community. And, with the shift to offices as the main occupants of Jianwai SOHO, any other retail model than the coffee bar or lunchtime restaurant was left exposed to bankruptcy. The small group of residents, mainly foreign professionals, in the end got their own little supermarket, a franchise stocking only western products to provide a minimum of home comforts among the sea of beauty parlours and lifestyle hangouts. With many of the private Chinese investors that bought apartments in Jianwai SOHO unwilling to take up residency and looking for a rent beyond the means of most average Chinese professionals (leaving only the foreign professionals and small businesses as potential tenants) there is little hope that the service landscape in Jianwai SOHO will change anytime soon.

Conclusion.

External influence on Chinese cities and traditional forms of housing was apparent long before the current economic opening of China and the resulting influx of the imagery of western lifestyle. From the colonial influences on cities such as Shanghai, Qingdao or Macao to the ideals of the Soviet-style city planning, the traditional urban patterns of Chinese cities have been in a constant state of restructuring and adaptation over the last century. Nonetheless the century-old social fabric has shown an incredible resilience and capacity to assimilate and adapt foreign housing typologies into its fabric. Until now, however, the constant and intense urbanisation of the Chinese people

has kept a constant pressure on cities to densify and the provision of housing to be supply-oriented rather than demand-oriented. Competition between housing developments for the growing middle-class to invest in and to live in has been a very recent luxury. And while the new urban middle-class population in China and Beijing has been seemingly faster than most to embrace and adapt to the new imagery of a globalised culture, it remains to be seen how long their attraction will last and how the cities will adapt to their new clothes over time. Will these managed and programmed, 'western style' housing developments remain segregated fragments within the city or impact long-term on the grain of Chinese cities and its social fabric? Will they, as the young Chinese architect Ma Qingyun of Mada S.p.a.m argued, be simply a space for the Chinese way of doing things, a transitional, image charged shell, that once outdated might be discarded, transformed or ultimately demolished like so many other outlived symbols in China's recent transformation.

Jianwai SOHO might have been an architectural success and its inbuilt adaptability certainly allowed it to transform from a mixed-use development to a managed business and entertainment park. But Yamamoto's vision of it becoming a lived-in, permeable urban landscape, an organic part of the urban and social fabric of the city has not materialised. And with his Codan Shinonome housing project in Tokyo, sharing all the main urban design ideals of Jianwai SOHO and creating a vibrant new city quarter and becoming an organic part of Tokyo, it appears that Chinese society might just not be ready yet for Yamamoto's vision. Only time will tell how this new piece of urban landscape will integrate into Beijing and whether it will transform from a programmed city within the city to a sustainable community. But given the short lifespan for buildings in fast paced China, it seems there is little time for belated adjustments.

Roland Bosbach has worked in Beijing and Shanghai as an architect and urban designer and lived in Jianwai SOHO for one year after its opening in April 2004.

Author's note: see also www.sohochina.com for further projects.

Peruvian Mats Notes on Atelier 5 at Previ Lima

MICHAEL PIKE

We have a right to ask 'why' housing should be as cheap as possible and not, for example, rather expensive, 'why' instead of making every effort to reduce it to minimum levels of surface, of thickness, of materials, we should not try to make it spacious, protected, isolated, comfortable, well-equipped, rich in opportunities for privacy, communication, exchange of personal creativity.

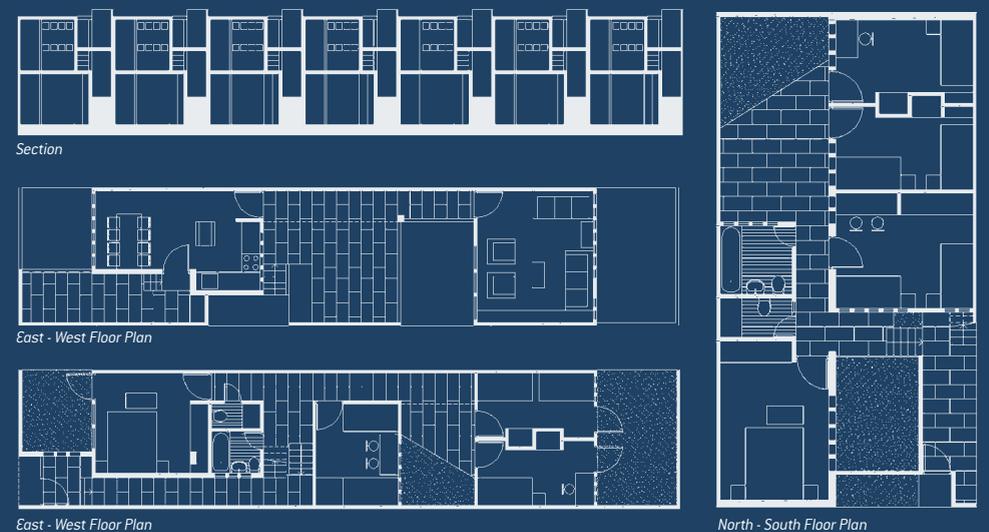
Giancarlo di Carlo, 'Legitimizing Architecture', Forum Vol.23 1972

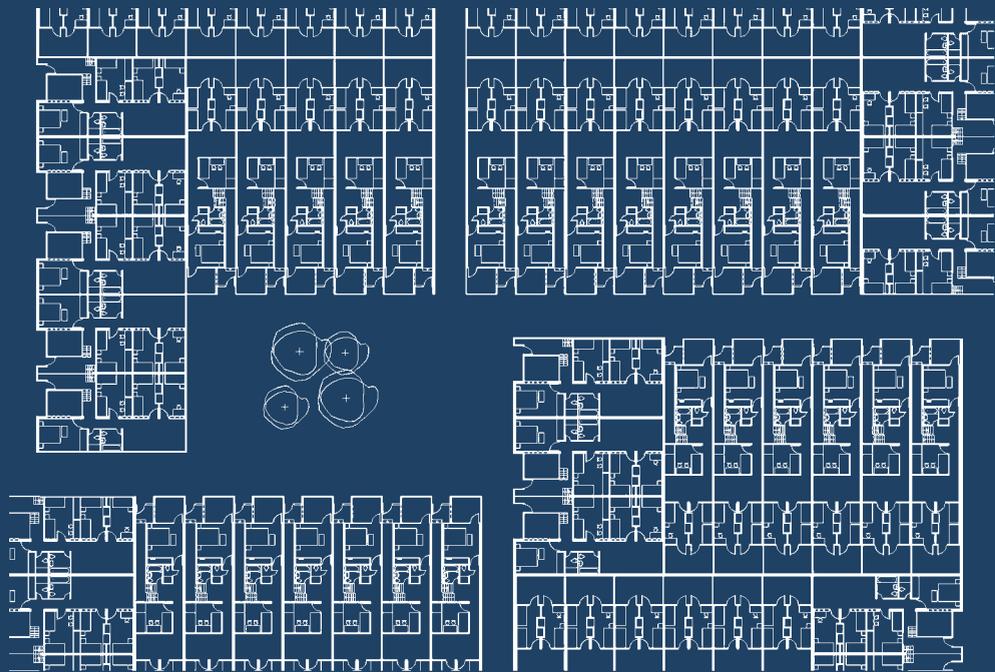
Experiment

The Proyecto Experimental de Vivienda (PREVI) was initiated in 1966 by the Peruvian Government and the United Nations Development Programme as an attempt to respond to the overwhelming urbanisation that occurred in Latin America during the 1960s. The enormous increase in urban populations meant that both the public and private sectors were completely unable to meet the demand for housing and resulted in the creation of vast squatter-towns, devoid of infrastructure and self-built by the inhabitants. Lima was one of the most extreme cases, with half of the population of the city living in these conditions by the mid-1960s. The intention of PREVI was to find new solutions for the creation and improvement of mass housing that would counteract the emergence of these squatter-towns.

Competition

A competition was organised involving 13 Peruvian architects and 13 international architects to design 1500 dwellings in Ciudad del Sol, a suburb of Lima. The international competitors consisted of some of the most influential architects of the time, including Atelier 5, James Stirling, Aldo van Eyck, Candilis-Josic-Woods, Charles Correa, Christopher Alexander and Kikutake-Kurokawa-Maki. A number of these competitors were members of Team X, while another prominent member, Jose Antonio Coderch, was part of the jury. The brief, written by the British architect Peter Land, was an attempt to establish the decisive advantages of low-rise, high-density housing. It called for an incremental unit, starting with a few rooms and increasing until it was capable of accommodating a family of 8-10 persons.





Neighbourhood Site Plan

Paradigm

As a result of this provocative brief and of the quality of the competitors, the projects that emerged can be seen as a significant counterproposal to the modern examples of collective housing, reflective of the change in architectural and urban discourse in the late 1960s. This new paradigm was motivated by an acceptance of the need to work with the uncertainty of urban development, seeking to make housing that could be adapted and transformed over time. In this way these projects began to think less in the modernist idea of a typical user, but rather in designing for a diverse and dynamic familial group.

Vernacular

The projects all involved an examination and recognition of local vernacular urban and dwelling forms, in keeping with the critical thought of Team X and other prominent architects at the time. This is most evident from the emphasis placed on the creation of pedestrian enclaves of lanes and squares as the central organising devices of the neighbourhood. The vernacular form of an urban order based on the social and spacial entity of the neighbourhood square is adapted and re-intrepreted in each of the proposals, seeing in this tradition the capacity to promote the appropriation of a collective urban space.

Realisation

Following a difficult adjudication process, in which a minority refused to go along with the majority decision, it was decided to award three First Prizes and to seek to build examples of each of the dwelling types proposed by the international competitors. Beginning in 1971 a cluster of fifteen units of each of the entries were constructed. They have been inhabited and transformed since then and still function as part of a viable and vibrant neighbourhood.

Informal

Previ-Lima could be considered as a 1960s version of the Weissenhof exhibition held in Stuttgart in 1927, bringing together the most influential architects of the time to address the making of low-cost housing. The shift in thinking is then strikingly evident; with Mies's housing Acropolis representing a kind of classical closed composition of pristine white objects; and with Previ-Lima embodying the opposing idea of an open system where the housing units are conceived as part of a dense interwoven fabric. However, the Peruvian project never received the kind of critical attention given to the Weissenhofsiedlung, located as it was in a poor suburb of Lima instead of on the outskirts of one of the wealthiest cities in Europe.



Infrastructure

One of the three joint First Prizes was awarded to Atelier 5. Their exemplary project sought to address the transformation of the dwelling through a kind of infrastructural strategy where a series of structural and spatial elements were fixed and permanent, around which other elements were allowed to change. Principally, the dwellings were conceived as a sequence of patios and gardens that became the central organising device, allowing for the growth of the house without jeopardising its spatial and environmental qualities.

Mat

The site is arranged as a dense fabric of dwellings accessed from narrow laneways, creating an intensity of occupation that recalls other neighbourhoods in Lima. These laneways widen in places to form neighbourhood squares, focal points within the mat and places for children to play. Cars are banked at the outer edges of the site and the centre is given over to a swath of parkland containing schools, kindergartens and sports centres. In this way the potential monotony of the mat is fragmented and infused with diverse scales and functions.

System

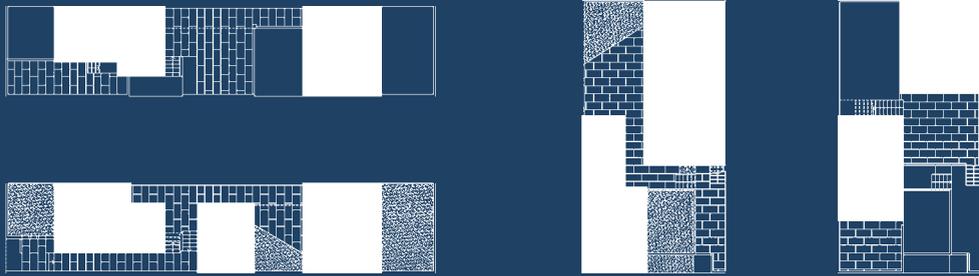
Atelier 5 presented a series of diagrams that carefully articulated the stages of construction. These recall the charts made by Gropius for his Torten-Dessau scheme of 1926-28 and display a similar attitude to industrialised construction. The project could not be considered as prefabrication as most of the work was to be carried out on the site, much of it by traditional means. The system therefore remains elementary when broken down into its constituent components, where each element is a separately produced item and all have to be assembled on site. In this way, it remains essentially open, not dependent on the integrated output of a single production belt, but instead remaining flexible, providing many alternatives and capable of responding to change.

House

There are two principal dwelling types, one oriented east-west and the other north-south. The E-W house measures 4.5m x 21.5m and employs an ingenious arrangement of half level changes to provide release to the narrow plan. The circulation switches from side to side and opens out into patios at different levels, making a rich diversity of spaces. The N-S dwelling measures 7.2m x 13.5m and uses a similar configuration of half levels and patios. Both of these dwelling types are designed to allow for additions at the upper levels and are capable of growing from four to nine rooms.

Garden

Both types of dwelling are in a sense conceived as pavillions in a garden, a series of rooms set within a continuous sequence of passages and patios. A kind of interweaving of house and garden is achieved, relating to the courtyard arrangements of Peruvian colonial architecture. The climate, where outdoor activities are possible for two-thirds of the year, is exploited as far as possible.



Garden Pavillon

Transformation

The Atelier 5 houses are platforms for transformation, with the sequence of patios providing the fixed element that ensures light and air for all the rooms. In this way the house is given a new potential to be a viable artefact; it allows for additions to the household, for a small business to be accommodated or for part of the house to be rented out. They work with the element of time and anticipate change.

Michael Pike is a director of gkmp architects and is a studio lecturer in UCD Architecture

ⁱ Quoted in Kenneth Frampton, *Labour, Work and Architecture*, Phaidon, London 2002, p.149.

Nuts and bolts

MARK PRICE

Due to mistiming, my entry into the profession coincided with a building boom. This has resulted in my working for the past fifteen years. The imminent collapse of the global economy means that today's graduate can avoid this hazard. This is doubly fortunate because in university, in order to spare students unnecessary worry, we withhold from them information regarding their future status as proletarians. The *proletarianisation* of architects refers both to the commodification of their labour and the general circumstances of their exploitation, as outlined by Marx in his theory of Progressive Production of Relative Overpopulation or an Industrial Reserve Army:

...in proportion as the productivity of labour increases, capital's supply of effective labour increases without a proportional increase in the demand for individual workers. The overwork of the employed part of the working class swells the ranks of the reserve (unemployed); while, conversely, the increased pressure which, through competition, the members of the reserve exert upon those who are in work, spurs these latter on to overwork, and subjects them more completely to the dictatorship of capital.ⁱ

The architect sells his labour

We architects may be forgiven for not thinking of ourselves as working class, because unlike other trades we sometimes get asked to stay for dinner. However, like any seller of a commodity the architect sells her labour 'at the going rate', which is the *exchange-value* attributed to her particular status, and what she needs to survive (cost of living). But there is always a difference between this and the *use-value* of her labour, which is the value created by that labour. The profit or surplus value, which the capitalist extracts from the waged architect, depends on this difference. Thanks to productivity gains this has been greatly increased by the introduction of computers. Computers, which further privatise the means of production, thereby decisively intervene in the process of commodification of architectural work.

Karl Kraus described Progress as having 'subordinated the purpose of life to the means of subsistence and turned us into the nuts and bolts for our tools'ⁱⁱ. The effect of computers on work accelerates the historical intensification of labour which resulted from the legal reduction in the working day first brought about by the Twelve Hours Act of 1832. When factory owners could no longer demand twelve-hour days from the workers, they turned up the speed of the machines. Lord Shaftesbury in 1844, speaking in the House of Commons, said that 'The labour performed by those engaged in the processes of manufacture is three times as great as in the beginning of [the Factory Acts]. Machinery has executed, no doubt, the work that would demand the sinews of millions of men; but it has *also prodigiously multiplied the labour of those who are governed by its fearful movements...*'ⁱⁱⁱ [emphasis added]. As Marx puts it: 'Labour time must be measured, not only in respect of its extension, but also in respect of its degree of condensation'. He quotes a factory inspector saying that 'Twelve hours' work is now compressed into less than ten hours. It is therefore self-evident, to what an enormous extent the toil of the factory operative has increased during the last ten years'^{ix}.

Once again *laissez-faire* capitalism is in the ascendant, known as neo-liberalism, and just as machines accelerated and condensed factory work in the 1830's, for the same purpose of unbridled capital accumulation, computers accelerate and condense office work today. In so doing, computers turn waged-

architects into tools, and tools wear out. However, the cost of the wear-and-tear of inanimate tools is borne by the owner. The seller of labour power, like the seller of any commodity, realises its exchange-value and alienates its use-value: he cannot get the former without disposing of the latter. [‘The use-value of labour power, the labour itself, does not belong to the seller of labour power any more than the use-value of oil that is sold belongs to the oilman who has sold it’^v.]

The mystification of architecture enacted in the academy, which posits a kind of ‘virtue is its own reward’ in relation to good practice, primes graduates for exploitation within this economy by downplaying both the fact that architectural work creates economic value, and the fact that the seller of this work does not partake of this value. [In fact the market has spilled over into the university. The curriculum is designed to prepare students to compete in the market, and because the market is hyperactive and global, there can be no limit to the amount of preparation required. The infinitely comprehensive curriculum ‘pre-creates’ the conditions of an overworked office, forever chasing impossible deadlines.]

This disavowal of the capitalist role of architecture takes the form of confusing architecture with art [art proper, it should be noted, is free of such misapprehensions: the art market is expanding exponentially, not least owing to the cooperation of artists and dealers; the artists understand fully, thanks in part to post-modern theory, the role of the market in assigning value to art]. Loos made trenchant and still-relevant comments on this mystification. As Aldo Rossi put it in his introduction to *Spoken into the Void*:

In this light, Loos’s sarcasm directed against the Secession is easier to understand; what Loos is really attacking in his contemporaries is not so much their style or taste (even though he finds it abominable) – what he cannot tolerate is the ‘redemptive’ value they assign to their actions. One trade is as good as another; and even a trade like washing dishes can be done well provided one breaks as few as possible^{vi}.

In fact the most underpaid (hence overworked) architects are often those working in so-called ‘design-led’ practices. This should not be confused with the tradition of rich young architects spending time working for free for a famous name. [Le Corbusier paid no wages during the late 20’s and 30’s in his atelier on the Rue de Sevres, and Wright’s Taliesin Fellowship was arguably just an office posing as a school. Apprentices in these offices were not being exploited, insofar as the terms of their engagement had been made explicit.]

Divide and Rule

One of the uses of skilful design is to enable money to be made out of property. It can do this by making development appear more acceptable (so that what might otherwise be rejected on account of its being too big, is made to appear smaller through fragmentation, or is scaled down at the edges to fit in with its context); or by romanticising the overcrowded vernacular (architects often claim that greater density promotes social life); or simply by glamorising capital accumulation (providing images of desire). Because architecture requires surplus capital, and especially at a time of waning state investment, waged architects may be less critical of the activities of capital than other members of the working class. But architects should not resign themselves to the role of ‘decorators of power’ (in Renzo Piano’s phrase). A critical strain

of modernism, beginning with Ruskin and Morris, (and arguably reaching its apogee in Wright,) attempted to devise a form of practice which could resist the predations of capital and defend the commons. This called into question the relationship between technology, design and production. C.R. Ashbee’s Guild and School of Handicraft of 1888 included in its statement of aims the setting ‘a higher standard of craftsmanship, *but at the same time, and in so doing, to protect the status of the craftsman*’^{vii} [emphasis added]. It has become commonplace to refute the social achievements of the Arts and Crafts Movement, whose products only rich people could afford. But this is to ignore the central agenda of improving the conditions in which these products were manufactured. William Morris proposed a reading of history in which ‘popular art’ is rescued from its status as the poor relation of the academy:

Absolute perfection in art is a vain hope; the day will never come when the hand of man can thoroughly express the best of the thoughts of man. Why then should we deprive ourselves of all the fancy and imagination that lies in the aim of so many men of lesser capacity than that of the great masters?^{viii}

Morris celebrated the ‘Gothic’ virtues of ‘wild imagination, the love of nature, the scorn of pedantry and stilted pompousness; the genuine, unashamed sentiment, and all this tempered by plenteous good humour and a love of homely and familiar things’, which had emerged from the husk of decadent Greco-Roman culture.^{ix} This is art which is produced by ordinary people working cooperatively. Morris unlike Marx was critical of the loss of traditional social forms caused by the industrial revolution. The social forms idealised by Morris were the craft-guilds of the middle ages, where there ‘was no division of labour inside the guilds save that which arose from the learning of the craft: every full-instructed workman was master of his whole craft’^x.

We are the robots

Architects are skilled craft workers, and computers are being used by capital to de-skill the profession. Computers are machines which serve to produce surplus value by cheapening the labour commodity. Skilled workers are expensive and troublesome. A common misunderstanding is expressed in the idea that a computer is ‘a tool just like any other’. Marx carefully parses the difference between machines and tools. This is based on a distinction he makes between ‘manufacture’ (pre-industrial revolution), and ‘machinofacture’:

In manufacture, the workers, isolated or in groups, have to carry out each partial process with their hand tools. The worker is, indeed, adapted to the process, but the process has previously been adapted to the worker. This subjective principle of the division of labour no longer exists in the case of machine production. Here the whole process becomes objective, is considered in and by itself, analysed into its constituent phases; and the problem of carrying out each detail process, and of combining the various partial processes, is solved by the technical application of mechanics, chemistry etc.

In his *Philosophy of Manufacture*, Andrew Ure puts it as follows: ‘The principle of the factory system then is to substitute the partition of a process into its essential components, for the division or gradation of labour among artisans’^{xii}. This is in order to effect what may be termed, following Harvey, ‘accumulation by

dispossession of skills'. A modern example is given by Eric Schlosser in his account of the history of fast food:

The McDonalds fired all their carhops in 1948, closed their restaurant, installed larger grills, and reopened three months later with a radically new method of preparing food...To fill a typical order, one person grilled the hamburger; another "dressed" and wrapped it; another prepared the milk shake; another made the fries...For the first time, the guiding principles of a factory assembly line were applied to a commercial kitchen. The new division of labour meant that a worker only had to be taught how to perform one task. Skilled and expensive short-order cooks were no longer necessary.^{xiii}

In 1881 Frederick Winslow Taylor began his 'time-motion' studies at the Midvale Steel plant in Philadelphia. These led him to promulgate his influential 'Principles of Scientific Management', which allowed factory owners to vastly increase productivity by breaking down each task into a sequence of discrete, measurable steps. 'Taylor's system is still very much with us', writes Nicholas Carr:

...and now, thanks to the growing power that computer engineers and software coders wield over our intellectual lives, Taylor's ethic is beginning to govern the realm of the mind as well. The Internet is a machine designed for the efficient and automated collection, transmission and manipulation of information, and its legions of programmers are intent on finding the "one best method" - the perfect algorithm - to carry out every mental movement of what we've come to describe as 'knowledge work'.^{xiv}

Architecture as a popular art has all but disappeared in the West. There is an academic elite, which engages in increasingly restless formal experiments, haunted by the idea that 'everything has been done before' in a culture whose only values are 'modernity' and 'innovation'. The triumph of the International Style over its alternatives heralded the defeat of what Morris would have termed Gothic. International in this sense is not to be contrasted with 'regional' (despite Frampton's attempt to rescue the ideology of late modernism by linking criticism with regionalism), but with non-systemic modes. This is where computers will be decisive. Ruskin and Morris were the heirs to the Tory critics of eighteenth century improvements. Uvedale Price in his *Essay on the Picturesque* of 1794 saw the vulgarity of Capability Brown in his distance from nature, his obliviousness to the peculiarities of locality. Brown, arguably the first 'superstar' architect, had devised a system which ended up making all places look alike, by 'imposing an abstraction'. Brown acted in the interests of wealthy patrons who wished to make their mark on the landscape. 'The picturesque on the other hand was concerned with the blending together of diversity into harmonious images of connection and mutual dependence'.^{xv} This presaged Wright's ideal of 'Organic' architecture.

Labour power, also characterised by Marx as 'capacity for labour', can be described as 'the aggregate of those bodily and mental capabilities existing in a human being which he exercises when he produces a use-value of any kind'. These powers are precious, and their expenditure should be considered most carefully. Young architects must attempt to de-mystify their working arrangements, in order to reclaim the benefits of their productive powers. This struggle for repossession must begin immediately. Students must organise against the predations of capital, both within and outside the academy. As David Harvey puts it:

With the core of the problem so clearly recognised, it should be possible to build outwards into a broader politics of creative destruction mobilised against the dominant regime of neo-liberal imperialism foisted upon the world by the hegemonic capitalist powers.^{xvi}

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i Marx, Karl, *Capital* (J.M. Dent, 1933), p. 702.

ii Unsourced. See www.theabsolute.net/minefield/kraus.html

iii Marx, *op.cit.*, p.440.

iv Marx, *op.cit.*, p.444.

v Marx, *op.cit.*, p.158.

vi Loos, Adolf, *Spoken Into the Void* (MIT, 1982), p.ix.

vii See Crawford, Alan, C.R. Ashbee: *Architect, Designer and Romantic Socialist* (Yale, 1985).

viii Morris, William, *On the Origins of Ornamental Art*, [1888], in www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1883/ornament.htm

ix Morris, *op.cit.*,

x Morris, *op.cit.*,

xi Marx, *op.cit.*, p.401.

xii Quoted in Marx, *op.cit.*, p.402.

xiii Schlosser, Eric, *Fast Food Nation* (Penguin, 2002), p.19.

xiv Carr, Nicholas, *Is Google Making Us Stupid?* See www.theatlantic.com/doc/print/200807/google

xv Everett, Nigel, *The Tory View of Landscape* (Yale, 1994) p.104.

xvi Harvey, David, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford, 2003) p.179.

The Chicago Spire – ‘Art, Sculpture or Architecture?’ A Bittersweet Symphonyⁱⁱ

DERMOT BOYD

Recently, I attended the Irish launch of the Chicago Spire in Fitzwilliam Square, Dublinⁱⁱⁱ. I consumed large quantities of Moët & Chandon Champagne and ate many canapés provided by The Four Seasons Hotel. I watched films and fireworks. I listened to musicians and movie stars but I didn't see much architecture!

But this event was not aimed at architects for we are not rich and potential investors. We can only be spectators in this world. Here architecture was being sold. It was the marketing of what the developers now define as *architecture*. It is brand, audacious and empty. This was entertainment, a media circus. I found the whole experience of that evening deeply depressing.

Our comperes were Liam Neeson and Natasha Richardson. Both are accomplished Hollywood stars, and they put on a good performance (although the autocue did help their sincerity that evening).

In his introduction, Liam Neeson declared that Santiago Calatrava, the architect of the Chicago Spire, was a 'true master of his craft' and 'a modern day Leonardo da Vinci of architecture'. I do not agree with him nor unfortunately did I believe him for Mr. Neeson is an actor not an architectural critic.

Next came the architect as actor, the *star* of the evening, Mr Calatrava and yes another performance was required. On his declaration that 'image sometimes is more direct and eloquent than words', Calatrava moved to the lectern where he took out his Caran d'Ache clutch pencil and began to draw. This was potentially interesting...the architect as draughtsman, thinking and communicating directly to the audience through line and image.

So he drewa flower, a bird, a shell, the spire and a face! There was no *parti*, no plans, no perspectives, no renderings of the building in the city. To me, his drawings made no sense, he explained nothing about the building, he was not thinking or communicating as an architect. He created a fable. It was embarrassing. The architect as actor, true conceptualisation sidelined. Architecture as a charade.

After some further words from developer Garrett Kelleher, the finale came, we were to see the Chicago Spire. A special animation which had been commissioned from Sony Image Works and Light Stream Pictures^{iv} was shown. This was no ordinary film for we saw the building from the wings of a dove (quite literally), through a water droplet, and as a seed, but not as a person. In this imagined world, there are no people in this building, there was no one in Chicago. Surely not a 'message of hope!'^v for that city.

If the fiction was not to my taste, the facts are impressive. The Spire is 610m tall. It will surpass Chicago's own Sears Tower at 442m tall, and New York's upcoming Freedom



Tower planned to be 541m tall, to become North America's tallest tower and the tallest residential building in the world. It will contain 1,193 condominiums ranging in price from \$750,000 to \$40million. The budget for the project is \$2.4 billion dollars and it is financed by the Anglo Irish Bank. This is no mean achievement for Garrett Kelleher and he should be congratulated as an Irish developer and businessman.

However as architecture, in my opinion, it is a less successful project. The Spire is a very tall and thin building, it sits in isolation on the edge of Lake Michigan and I wonder if it is such a welcomed addition to the clustered skyline of Chicago. In a more immediate context, the building occupies a very small plot alongside Ogden Slip on the Chicago River. It's nearest neighbour, the Lake Point Tower Apartments on North Lake Shore Drive, designed by Schipporeit-Heinrich Architects in 1968 (a beautiful homage to Mies van der Rohe's curvilinear glass skyscraper for Berlin of 1921-22) will be dwarfed by the Spire.

I find the disproportion between height and base of the Spire unsettling. A developer's dream maybe, an engineer's challenge, but for the architect, not necessarily a perfect equation in commodity firmness and delight.

I visited the 'Turning Torso' (2005) in Malmo, Sweden, another 'iconic' building by Santiago Calatrava. This building also has a tiny footprint. It's engagement with the ground and site is under-developed. In urban terms, it is designed as a marker, not a building. The twisting external structural skeleton is crudely detailed and inelegant. Yes it is tall, you can see it from miles around but for the person standing in front of it or I suggest using it, it is flawed and uninspiring. I was disappointed by the project for the same reasons that I am wary of the Chicago Spire.

Calatrava's interest for me seems to lie in the engineering of objects or making large-scale sculpture. He claims to be inspired by nature but he does not concentrate on reading space in nature, he focuses on the object itself. He is too literal. The building is like a bird, a shell, even an eye^{vi}.

For the design of the Chicago Spire, at the early stages he likened the structure to an imaginary smoke spiral rising from a campfire lit by the Native Americans that were once indigenous to the Chicago area. Later, he related the building to the 'graceful' and 'rotating forms' of a snail shell. Cannot it just be architecture?

In my opinion, many of his buildings are like the sun-dried carcasses of dead animals, this is a metaphor or image I am sure Calatrava has not used to



describe his work, but it is one which I believe is a valid spatial analogy. Whether it is an art museum, a transportation hub or an opera house, many of his buildings just look the same. Yes, they may move, twist and contort but through this contrived manipulation of form, they do not 'shift our perception of beauty' as Mr. Neeson claims.

In terms of urbanism, I see failings too. Calatrava suggests in the booklet given out to the prospective buyers and journalists that 'we can create new ways of living here'. This is never explained. However from my knowledge of the project, the Chicago Spire is no social experiment. It is to be built by the rich for the rich.

You have to go up the Chicago River and examine the brilliance of Marina City by Bertrand Goldberg Associates 1959-67 to seek out a keener architectural vision regarding city living. Goldberg designed a *city within a city* for 24 hour urban living in a vicinity previously occupied by rail-roading yards. The two towers of apartments incorporated everything: stores, a restaurant, a health centre, a swimming pool, a skating rink, an exhibition space, a theatre, a marina, a bowling alley, car parking and an office tower. This is great architecture and still looks futuristic and heroic today.

In 1999, I visited the top floor of the Sears Tower 1,454ft /110 stories high (Skidmore Owings and Merrill 1968-74) in Chicago. I remember distinctly being on my own, listening to the whistling of the wind and the building creaking around me. Later that day, I drank cocktails on the 96th floor of the John Hancock Tower 1,127ft /100 stories high (Skidmore Owings and Merrill 1969) looking over the darkness of Lake Michigan on one side and the illuminated low rise of the Chicago suburbs on the other. A much more pleasurable experience of course. I just don't know if I would want to live day and night in a 2000ft vertical village.

The evening did also prove one fundamental aspect to me about our profession: architects are being slowly side-lined. The architecture does not matter, it is to be marketed as a brand. We are to become actors, performers, even stars in this world and the script is written for us. Architects choose not to challenge or shape society anymore. We have given up our heroic role and become servants of commerce and slaves to development.

As the visionaries and true creators of space, we have to work harder to provide and maintain a meaningful physical and social environment for man.

We must re-discover ourselves and become Architects again!

Dermot Boyd is an Architect and a director of Boyd Cody Architects. He is a studio year-master and lecturer at the Dublin Institute of Technology.

i Garrett Kelleher

ii Song by The Verve played over a film showing images of Chicago

iii Even this ever tranquil city garden is now for corporate hire

iv Please note, an important name, a brand.

vi Santiago Calatrava

vii The Science Museum Valencia by Santiago Calatrava

Stage City Stage

YVONNE AL-TAIE

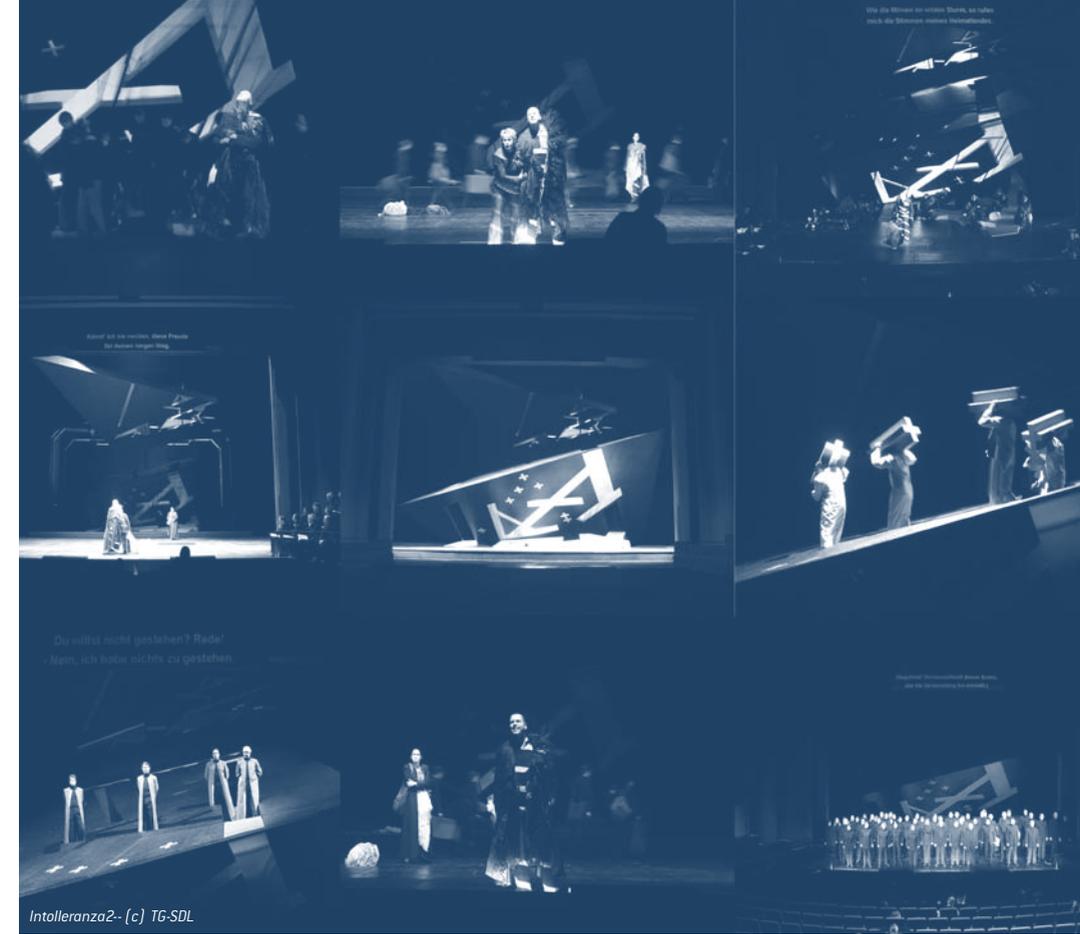
The *Grand Canal Performing Arts Centre*, a large-scale new theatre building under construction at Grand Canal Square in the heart of Dublin's docklands is set to become the focal point of the redeveloped docklands area. The theatre is the most prominent element addressing the new public space and is flanked by mixed-use buildings to either side. An accentuated pathway across the square leading to the building's main entrance mirrors the most strongly articulated structure of the façade and is highlighted by a sculptural structure of grouped red bars rising vertically above the space. A shard-like stone element, which functions as a fountain is embedded into this structure and echoes in its material and shape the façade of the theatre building. While the theatre's main façade is highly articulated, the west front of the building is embedded in two blocks of office buildings flanking Macken Street and Cardiff Lane.

While the building can be entered from both Macken Street and Grand Canal Square, the main foyer addresses the latter and stretches over three stories. Images show this space filled with escalators and digital screens, a style more akin perhaps to a cinema than centre for performing arts. Yet the 2000 seater auditorium promises to offer excellent views of the large stage. In addition to the foyer a restaurant with a roof terrace overlooking Grand Canal Dock in the upper stories of the building is planned.

Since it is mainly via the façade that the building shapes the public space of Grand Canal Square, I will focus on this feature of the building when discussing Daniel Libeskind's design for the *Grand Canal Performing Arts Centre* in Dublin, in the light of his theoretical thinking as well as within the realm of his architectural oeuvre. This article will approach the design by comparing the first design proposal for Grand Canal Square with a stage set Libeskind designed for a production of Luigi Nono's opera "Intolleranza 1960" at the Saarländisches Staatstheater in Saarbrücken, Germany. In short, their forms are more or less identical. This re-use of form raises two issues: firstly the specific symbolism Libeskind attaches to his architectural forms; and secondly the structural or functional connection between a theatre building arranged along the concept of stages and a stage set that multiplies one single stage into multiple stages. Since the first design proposal presented to the public and published on Libeskind's website allows us to outline clearly these problems, this article refers to the first official proposal instead of the revised design, currently under construction.

In the project-description for the *Grand Canal Performing Arts Centre* published on his official website Daniel Libeskind says about the project: 'The building is based on the concept of stages: the stage of the theatre itself, the stage of the piazza, and the stage of the theatre lobby above the piazza, when it is illuminated at night. [...] The piazza acts as a grand outdoor lobby for the theatre. With the dramatic theatre elevation as a backdrop and platforms for viewing, the piazza itself becomes a stage for civic gathering.'ⁱ

When Libeskind stresses the concept of the theatre as a stage in his reflections on this project he seems to inherently point to the idea of an interaction of the fictional world performed on stage and the real world taking place outside the theatre-building and so hints at an interesting ambiguity between performance and real life. Astonishingly little attention is paid to the stage itself in the text while the building as such, including its working areas and the foyers is regarded as a set of stages being looked at from the piazza while the piazza itself is turned into a stage from the viewpoint of the theatre. 'The Grand Canal Theatre



Intolleranza2- [c] TG-SDL

is housed in a dynamic volume allowing the piazza to interact with the foyers and inner workings of the Theatre. [...] Viewed from the piazza, the theatre foyers become a multi-level stage behind the glass curtain of the main facade. And vice versa, viewed from the multi-level platforms of the theatre foyer, the piazza acts as a grand outdoor stage.ⁱⁱ Interestingly the hierarchy of actor and spectator seems to be given up by a mutual experience of the other's realm as stage. At the same time a certain ambivalence concerning the status of stage and real world is inherent to this idea, as their boundaries seem to vanish.

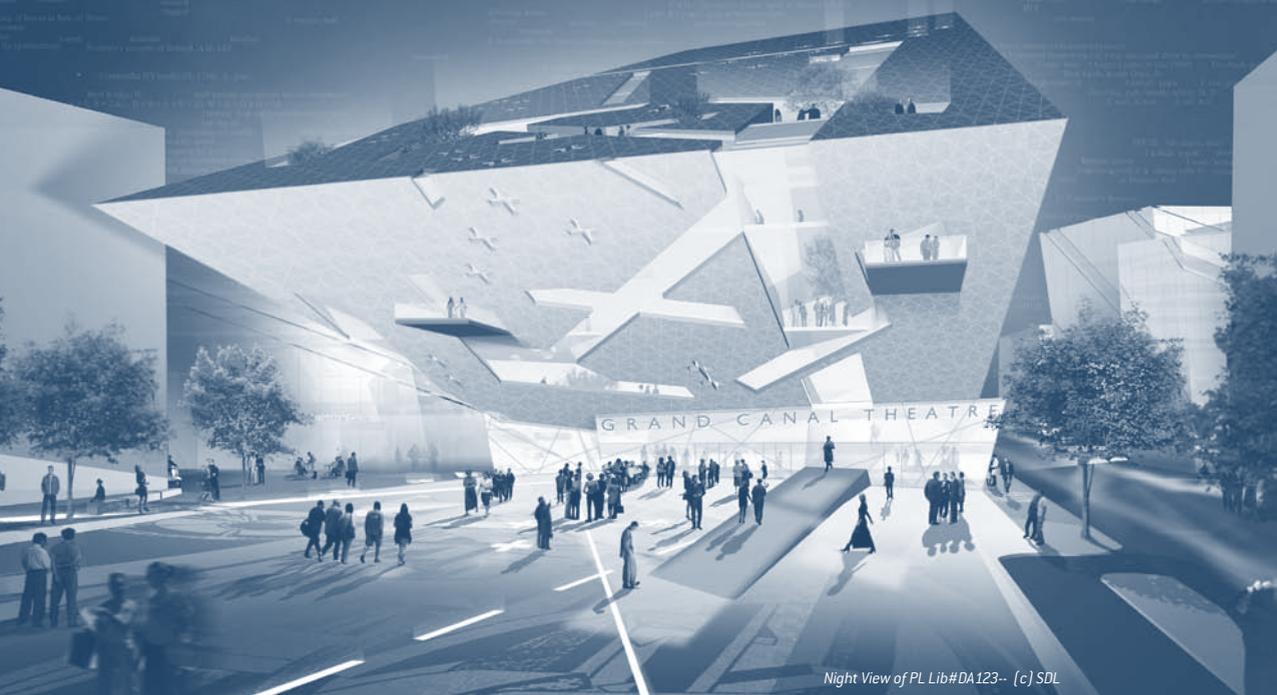
Theatrum Mundi

These ideas recall the renaissance concept of *theatrum mundi*, in which the world as stage is considered and which indeed has long been a source of inspiration for Daniel Libeskind, who in 1985 used the title for a series of drawings which is accompanied by a text that oscillates (as many of Libeskind's writings do) between theoretical writing and poetry. The first stanza-like passage introducing this concept goes as follows:

When it comes to the idea of *Theatrum Mundi*, one thing is certain: that whatever that strange spectacle came from, it will probably no longer have anything to do with the celebration of the dead or the living, with memory or imagination.ⁱⁱⁱ

After highlighting the fact that the contemporary use of the concept of *theatrum mundi* has little to do with its originally transcendent meaning (closely related to a culture's memory and an imagination to a certain extent detached from reality), he refers to the concept as revealing a problematic understanding of urban space:

The premonition of the future – in the sense of *Theatrum Mundi* – is presented here in the form of a city besieged by an unknown infection, an action taking place within the nucleic medium that flows in the bloodstream of architectural thought.^{iv}



Night View of PL Lib#DA123-- (c) SDL

And the last stanza begins with the following verses:

To deal with the urban seems an impudence that takes the most biological, private, and hidden form of existence possible today, and turns this reality into a collective fiction. The space of the city is closed because its structure has become transparent.

Libeskind clearly hints to the dangers of urban master planning – the all too structured, all too organised space deprives the city's inhabitants of their power of organising their urban environment according to their daily life. By implementing a subordinated arrangement of urban space this very space becomes detached from the reality of thousands of people's lives that structure it by the multilayered marks and footprints of their everyday transactions.

Libeskind's pejorative use of the term of *theatrum mundi* in his 1985 text seems to be challenged by the concept of stages as applied to the Grand Canal design. Yet before discussing this problem in depth I would like to pay attention to some further aspects of the design's structure with regard to the concept of theatre and the stage in Libeskind's work.

Stage Set for Luigi Nono's *Intolleranza 1960*

Having so far briefly pointed out Libeskind's earlier engagement with the idea of theatre in relation to urban spaces it would also appear that the meaning and function of stages has influenced his design for the *Grand Canal Performing Arts Centre*. However the structure of the Grand Canal design is perhaps more deeply rooted in Libeskind's thinking about stage design than one could expect from his rather superficial statements given in the project description.

In 2004 Daniel Libeskind designed a stage set for a production of the communist composer Luigi Nono's *Intolleranza 1960* at the Saarländisches Staatstheater in Saarbrücken/Germany. The opera deals with the topic of intolerance, the awakening conscience of it among people and in consequence people's awakening resistance against it. While the opera's protagonists act on stage and experience themselves confronted

with and subdued by the power of injustice this power itself remains invisible throughout the performance and is not intended to appear on stage but for few scenes in Nono's libretto. It is the idea of making this very power visible through the stage design which the stage director Christian Pöppelreiter and Daniel Libeskind agreed on. As Pöppelreiter states, from the very beginning of their collaboration they imagined a sculptural object to represent power while protecting against counter-power, a form that represents the inequality of power in the world.^v Formally it is designed as a structure erected on stage with a low ramp leading towards the high rising structure, which fills the stage area by a wide projection that recedes again and is echoed by a further projecting wing rising above the main structure. An inclination of the whole structure provides further dynamic to its overall appearance. This sculpture multiplies the one stage into several levels of stages on which the play can be performed simultaneously. This spatial separation of the different social groups represented in the opera and their hierarchic arrangement in space, elevating some from the main stage level allows the balance of power to be visualised by the audience.

Architecture as language I: Linking Berlin – Saarbrücken – Dublin?

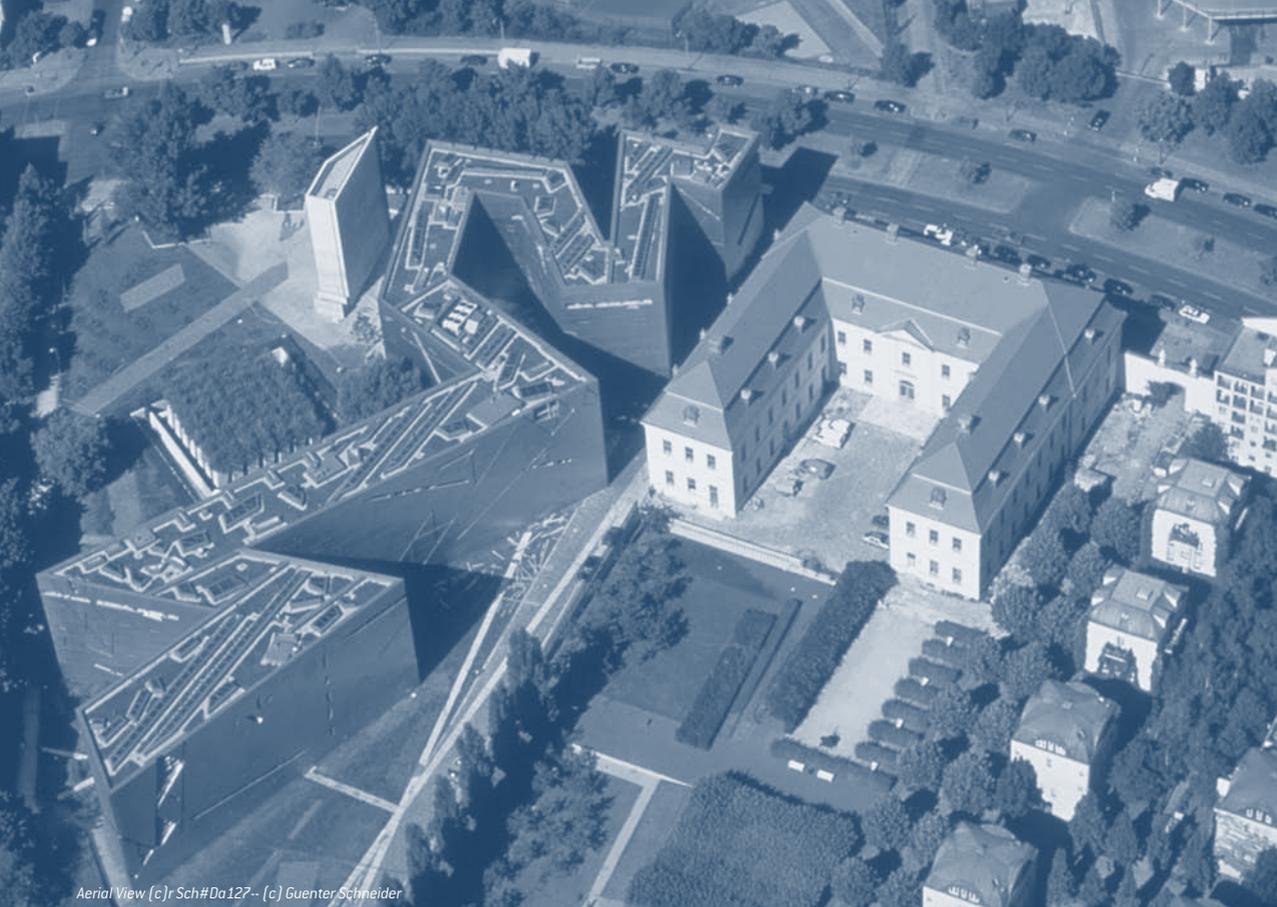
The lines cutting through the *Raumskulptur* of the stage set (which include opening doorways and pathways to the actors) are the very shapes of the windows running through a wall of Libeskind's first realised project - the *Jewish Museum Berlin*. And these very lines were – in the first proposal – supposed to be echoed as windows in Dublin's theatre building.

In his design for the Berlin Jewish Museum, Libeskind studied the way in which the general history of Berlin and the city's Jewish history could be understood through the relations between the city's Jewish and non-Jewish inhabitants. He made these relationships the foundation of his project. A matrix of lines running across the city map connected the addresses of well-known Jewish and non-Jewish inhabitants most of whom were writers, artists and thinkers. The connections Libeskind made do not necessarily refer to real relationships among those people, rather they hint to Berlin's rich cultural and intellectual history, which would have been impossible without both its Jewish as well as its non-Jewish inhabitants and their mutual stimulation. Libeskind then used this matrix as a generator of his museum design. Both the floor plan and the elevation (including the extraordinary shape of the windows) are arranged according to the rules of this network. So these lines and shapes represent the link between the Jewish and non-Jewish history of Berlin on a metaphorical level.^{vi}

How then is Libeskind able to design iconic architectural structures that hold an inherent and specific symbolism, interwoven with the building's geographic and functional context, and then easily transfer these very symbolically loaded structures to designs in other cities and with completely different functions?

Through Libeskind's preference for symbolic forms, and the somewhat arbitrary use of form, we face a tension that seems hard to resolve. In order to explore this problem further we should shift our attention to another aspect of Libeskind's work – his theoretical thinking about architecture as language.

In an image from the late 1990s Libeskind shows work derived from the intersections of the line-matrix from his Jewish Museum project that is given the title architectural alphabet. Thinking about architecture



Aerial View (c) r Sch#Da127-- (c) Guenter Schneider

in terms of language seems to be crucial for him. 'Architecture is a language', he tells us on his website. In one of his earliest projects, *Three Lessons in Architecture*, an installation for the Venice Biennale in 1985, he built three machines representing reading, remembering and writing of architecture.^{vii} Another approach towards the concept of the letter and the text can be found in his projects for Jewish institutions. Developing these projects from the background of Jewish thinking about the holiness of the letter and the text, Libeskind goes so far as to design them in the shape of three-dimensional Hebrew letters.^{viii}

To properly judge Libeskind's adoption of linguistic elements in his architecture we should examine the linguistic alphabet and its mechanism. What does the idea of an architectural alphabet imply and what may be the limits for an architect working with an alphabet in contrast to a writer using letters when writing a text?

An alphabet is made up of a set of arbitrary signs – graphemes - each of which denotes a phonem out of which words for objects and ideas are constructed. The relation between the signified object and the signifying word is arbitrary, which means that the words we use in the act of communication are based upon convention. Yet when understanding an architectural form as sign one has to take into account that it also necessarily depends upon its material function. As Peter Eisenman states: 'Architecture can be considered a motivated sign system [in the sense of Pierce's classification] because the sign and the signified are one and the same thing.'^{ix} Eisenman understands architectural signs as solely denoting their own structure. So in contrast to the linguistic sign, which establishes an arbitrary relation to the object it is referred to, Eisenman postulates a complete identification of sign and signified object in the realm of architectural semiotics. Additionally he also definitely denies architecture's potential of metaphorical expression.

[A sign in architecture] is motivated to present what it patently is – its structuring presence – and nothing else. Therefore in the discursive interiority of architecture, the column, the wall, the floor, and the ceiling can initially be considered motivated signifiers; that is, nothing more than what they are or what they look like they are.^x

For Eisenman the architectural sign only denotes itself – the architectural structure is the architectural sign and there is no meaning beyond it.

In contrast to this concept Libeskind explores the possibilities of inventing architectural metaphors, which he successfully integrates in his *Jewish Museum Berlin*. But things become complicated when Libeskind tries to use these same structures imbued with meaning as arbitrary signs according to the letters of language. So as long as a window only is at the same time a window and the sign of a window it can be used repeatedly without any difficulties to occur. Yet once a certain shape of a window is developed whose form is supposed to hint to the Jewish-non-Jewish relations in Berlin's history this particular window cannot be re-used in any other context without carrying its meaning with it. Reusing these forms once charged with a particular meaning in random contexts completely detached from this original metaphorical understanding, reduces the form to a mere aesthetic gesture.

Architecture as language II: linking similar structures of space

Libeskind also offers another approach towards the analogy between language and architecture when he points to their general structural similarities, one which he already referred to in his above mentioned text, *Theatrum Mundi*. Here this analogy is not discussed in the realm of semiotics but rather as a fundamental structural parallel between architecture and language. This text that deals with *openness* and *closure* (reality and fiction of space) expresses the fear of an architecture too clearly defined: in over-structuring urban space the city's potential for development through a continuous interaction with people's lives is eroded. Structured urban space is described as closed and in analogy to this confining effect of architecture, language is understood as a limitation to be overcome: 'As language falls and falters the open is opened.'^{xi} These considerations suggest that Libeskind is striving for a new form of architecture (along with a new form of language) that provides the means for reality to take place. In an interview dealing with his work *Theatrum Mundi*, in 1987, Libeskind turns to the problem of architecture and reality, which once again he discusses by referring to the analogy of language.

The symbol that is there is not independent but is itself part of the process that throws it out. So in a way the things we have to grasp reality with, architecture reflectively are also part of the process that is engendering them in the first place, like language. [...] Reality comes out of those situations, like the unpredictability of drawings, the instability of objects or whatever else one strives for in architecture. All these are also part of the process in which that peculiar thing was born, and from which it cannot be detached without mutilation.^{xii}

Here architecture, as well as language, is understood structurally in its function of arranging and building up reality. Libeskind talks about the 'symbol' again comparing it to architecture. Architecture is understood in the same way as a symbol, closely bound to the process out of which it emerges; a means of grasping reality by being part of this process, which establishes both this reality as well as the means of getting hold of it. It is this structural thinking about architecture (also within the realm of language) which seems to offer fruitful responses to the re-structuring of large urban sites such as Dublin's docklands.

Yet there remains a tension between these reflections on architecture's impact on the organisation of urban life, and Libeskind's recent use of architectural structures deprived of their initial meaning. As Libeskind himself says here, the once found architectural form must not be detached from the process (and so the context) out of which it emerged. Whatever the architectural form is supposed to be applied to it should always be linked back to its original function. Libeskind thinks about architecture in terms of linguistically spoken tropes and he claims meaning to be inherent to the architectural form, there remains a demand for a reference to this meaning in the form's use in any actual building. It is this point of reference – this *tertium comparationis* that makes the transfer of an architectural structure from one project to another reasonable.

A second look at the Grand Canal design

So an attempt to interpret the Grand Canal design by analysing the symbolism of form given in the Saarbrücken stage set leads to a dead end. It is not the specific symbolism within this structure that Libeskind transfers to the Dublin project but a more general, overall idea of 'stage'. He explores the interaction of the realm of stage with the realm of reality and thereby challenges both – the stage as a setting for fictional events and the theatre building itself as an icon that represents the gate to a fictional world within the space of urban reality. It is possible to link these two projects by transferring this structural function where the point of reference (which is the 'stage') is given; yet it is missing with regard to the supposed symbolism of the form. This attributed symbolism does not reveal itself necessarily in the formal appearance of the stage design. Looking at the structure of the stage set does not offer the interpretation of represented power as referred to by Christian Pöppelreiter but instead it appears to be open to different approaches of interpretation. This stage set functions as a stage on stage, providing different levels to the actors who perform the opera in simultaneous scenes on the different levels offered to them. With regard to this structural aspect one can outline some significant similarities, which are pushed much further in the Dublin project. It is this three dimensional, bodily structure that offers shelter as well as stage-like platforms, which allows the transformation of this stage design into a design of a theatre building.

The structure of the first design proposal for the *Grand Canal Performing Arts Centre* embodies two different aspects related to Libeskind's architectural and theoretical oeuvre, expressing a tension between a very clearly specified, metaphorical meaning of certain forms and an overall, structural concept, which understands architectural elements in shifting functions and settings. The first one is set up in the realm of architectural semiotics. It asks the question whether architecture offers the possibility of establishing an architectural alphabet that can be used in accordance to the letters of a language thus allowing the architect to draw from a once established formal vocabulary in forthcoming building projects. The second is the question of architectural function and the process of structuring space. Libeskind deals with both in the realm of symbolism: he applies metaphorical meaning to architectural forms and he understands architecture's function of organising space symbolically. Yet if one regards an architectural structure as loaded with a symbolical meaning one has to consider that a relation to this symbolical meaning has to be given when this structure is applied to another project. If no point of reference is given the form loses the metaphorical meaning it once received and is reduced to mere aesthetics.

There are limits to the application of an architectural alphabet. But there is an exciting potential in thinking about architecture as a means of structuring urban space, dealing with the analogy of functionally related forms.

Transferring the window-shapes of the *Jewish Museum Berlin* to the stage set for *Intolleranza 1960* or the design for the *Grand Canal Performing Arts Centre* does not make sense because the metaphorical meaning assigned to them is unrelated. But transferring the structure of the stage set to the theatre building does work because of the analogous functions of both structures.

It is the concept of the stage as the structuring element of both the building and the urban space that is strengthened in Libeskind's revised design. The fenestration of the earlier design as derived from the line-matrix of the *Jewish Museum Berlin*, has been replaced by a glass curtain wall façade that reveals the inner spatial arrangement of the building and allows the foyer and the public square to interlock.

In applying this stage-like structure to the design of a theatre building and its outer environment Libeskind questions the building's very function and meaning as a theatre, its ability to provide a setting for a fictional world and to establish a clearly marked boundary between the realm of reality and that of fiction. Can the boundary between these two be considered as clearly marked, as it seems to be in the first place? When confronting this idea of transforming the spaces of reality into stages with Libeskind's considerations about urban space as expressed in his 1985 text a certain ambivalence to his new design seems to be revealed. Libeskind might remember his own words in arguing for urban planning that does not turn 'reality into a collective fiction'.

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- i Daniel Libeskind: Grand Canal Square Theatre and Commercial, in: <http://www.daniel-libeskind.com/projects/show-all/grand-canal-square-theatre-and-commercial/>
- ii *ibid*
- iii Daniel Libeskind: *Theatrum Mundi. Through the Green Membranes of Space*, 1985, in: Daniel Libeskind, *The Space of Encounter*, London 2001, p. 178.
- iv *ibid*, p. 179.
- v Christian Pöppelreiter, »Der Traum ist stärker als die Not«. Zum Hintergrund der Saarbrücker Inszenierung. Alexander Jansen im Gespräch mit Christian Pöppelreiter, in: Luigi Nono – *Intolleranza. Materialien – Skizzen – Hintergründe. Zur Inszenierung des Saarländischen Staatstheaters*, Saarbrücken 2004, p. 72.
- vi See for example Daniel Libeskind's project text: *Between the Lines, Jewish Museum Berlin, 1988-99*, in: Daniel Libeskind, *The Space of Encounter*, London 2001, p. 23-28.

- vii Daniel Libeskind: *Three Lessons in Architecture: The Machines. Installation*, Venice Biennale, 1985, in: Daniel Libeskind, *The Space of Encounter*, p. 180-182.
- viii See for example the never realised projects for a Jewish community centre and synagogue in Duisburg/Germany, the designs for the Danish Jewish Museum in Copenhagen (completed in 2003) or the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco, which is under construction right now.
- ix Peter Eisenman: *The Diagram and the Becoming Unmotivated of the Sign*, in: Peter Eisenman: *Diagram Diaries*, London 2001, p. 211.
- x Peter Eisenman: *The Diagram and the Becoming Unmotivated of the Sign*, in: Peter Eisenman: *Diagram Diaries*, London 2001, p. 211.
- xi Daniel Libeskind: *Theatrum Mundi. Through the Green Membranes of Space*, 1985, in: Daniel Libeskind, *The Space of Encounter*, London 2001, p. 178.
- xii Daniel Libeskind: *Theatrum Mundi*, Interview, 1987, in: Daniel Libeskind, *The Space of Encounter*, London 2001, p. 179-80.

Valuing the local(e) in suburbia

MARY P. CORCORAN

Place and the forces of globalisation

The meaning of place has long exercised the minds of geographers, philosophers and sociologists. The German philosopher Heidegger saw dwelling as the essence of being, offering the individual respite and refuge. Place in this sense of a locus of being, however, is directly threatened by the forces of globalisation that presage mobility, transience and impermanence. Fixity, belongingness and attachment are viewed as increasingly anachronistic in our globalised world. Globalisation facilitates the collapsing of barriers of time and space. As the latter recede in significance, social commentators have raised concerns about the emergence of a sense of placelessness in contemporary life. Relph, for example, has argued that the potential for people to develop a sense of place in technologically advanced cultures 'has been undermined by the possibility of increased spatial mobility and by a weakening of the symbolic qualities of places'. In a similar vein, Sennett contends that as capitalism spreads its tentacles globally into the public space of the city, 'attachment and engagement with specific places is dispelled...and the accumulation of shared history, and of collective memory, diminishes'.ⁱⁱ

Yet, it is also argued that precisely because of the homogenising and de-territorialising effects of globalisation we need now more than ever a notion of 'place' as stable, secure and unique. Tovey for instance has suggested that 'uneven spatial development in late capitalism heightens the significance of location as a source of identity and as a basis for collective mobilisation'.ⁱⁱⁱ Gieryn similarly has contended that 'in spite of the jet, the 'net and the fast food outlet, place persists as a constituent element of social life and historical change'.^{iv}

Place continues to resonate in our collective consciousness, to shape our memories, to inform our traditions and to contribute to our sense of selfhood. At the same time, we must acknowledge that the meaning of place has itself become somewhat destabilised, in particular, in the face of the threats posed by the forces of globalisation. How to define, locate and sustain a sense of place is an ongoing challenge. This is particularly the case in relation to suburbanisation processes that make a material imprint on the landscape and set in motion a new set of economic, social and cultural relations with place.

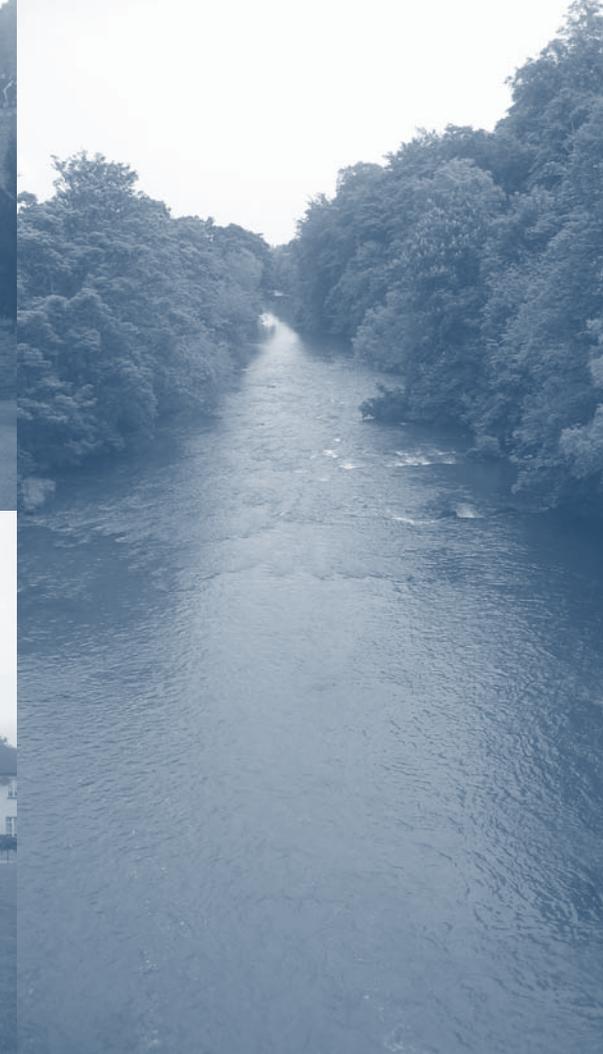
In an attempt to explore the reality of experiences of suburban dwellers in Dublin, whose localities are often assumed to lack a sense of place, a comparative analysis of four localities at different moments of suburban development, in different spatial contexts was undertaken. The four suburbs that were investigated were Leixlip, Co. Kildare; Esker, Co. Dublin, which has expanded rapidly in recent years as an outgrowth of Lucan; Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, an established small town that has become a growth pole attracting Dublin commuters; and Ratoath, Co. Meath, a very small village until the late 1980s, whose population has multiplied quite dramatically in recent years. Data was gathered through a representative social survey, focus groups and in-depth interviews during 2002-2004.

Defining place

Before embarking on a discussion of place and its meaningfulness within new suburban communities it is useful to advance a definition. For the present purposes, and drawing on the work of Gieryn (2000) we suggest thinking about place in terms of three key features. Firstly, place has a geographic location. In this



Leixlip



instance it is constituted as a particular suburban locality or neighbourhood. Secondly, place has material form. As a particular built environment imposed on a natural environment, the suburbs embody part of the material culture of everyday life. Thirdly, places are identified with and represented by ordinary people. Places are not simply physical forms and backdrops, nor are they simply a context for social interaction. They are also the repositories of imagery and projections, traditions and memories.

It is a generalised (though frequently untested) assumption that places that undergo suburbanisation lose their distinctiveness, their unique sense of place. In the Irish case, we have witnessed a very rapid suburbanisation in recent years that has extended the remit of the city substantially into areas that were formerly part of the countryside.

The growth of Dublin has been characterised by peripheral urban development since the early 1990s. While the Dublin urban core grew only minimally between 1991 and 2002, the city expanded into the hinterland creating new suburban neighbourhoods at some distance from the city centre. Indeed, the further one travels from the city centre, the more marked this suburban growth.

When country fields are re-developed as up-market suburban outposts, when country villages hum to the sound of juggernauts trundling through, when a provincial town becomes in the words of the *locals a dormitory suburb of Dublin* the locally rooted sense of place becomes destabilised. People fear that the place is losing something of its character, popular memory and tradition. And yet, our study of four suburbs, found that the majority of residents felt attached or very attached to their locality.

Many factors help to foster a sense of place, and create a sense of communality and belonging. Here we will focus on just one of these factors: the significance of a particular kind of ideology, *suburban pastoralism*, which is employed locally to give expression to a sense of place. Suburban pastoralism privileges the rural over the urban, although ironically the rural is largely construed through an urban lens or sensibility. Thus, for suburbanites, *rural* connotes vistas of green countryside, the idea of small-town (low density) living, and a *country feel* in terms of warm, reciprocal relations with others in the locality.

In the suburbs the idea of the pastoral retains an important symbolic and ideological dimension for residents. In the case of Ratoath and Leixlip, in particular, residents looked to pastoral signifiers or representations to define their sense of place. Interestingly, the ideology of suburban pastoralism was not as pertinent in Lucan-Esker, where effectively, the pre-existing rural landscape is seen as having had been largely destroyed through over-development. In Mullingar, the context is somewhat different to the other three localities. As a provincial town that is now ringed by suburban housing estates, Mullingar does not fit the *ideal type* of the sleepy village set in rolling countryside. It does, nevertheless, retain a rural character by virtue of its midlands location and status as a provincial town. For the purposes of illustrating this ideology further, I will focus here on Ratoath and Leixlip, the two localities that recorded the highest levels of place attachment among residents (79% and 72% respectively).

Suburban pastoralism and place in suburbia

In both the case of Ratoath and Leixlip local residents perceive the quality of life enjoyed in the community to be at least in part derived from the rural ethos that underpins the locality. This rural ethos is given active expression in an ideology of suburban pastoralism that frames both residents' everyday understandings and interpretations of place, and those cannily used by developers and estates agents. In Ratoath, the character of the place is frequently described in terms of the physical landscape, whereas in Leixlip it is primarily seen to inhere in the quality of community life, but crucially both are linked to an idealised version of rural life. Ratoath's greenery (the hedges, fields and trees) act as important signifiers of the countryside and rurality for respondents, both young and old.

Furthermore, rurality was associated with a positive experience of parenting for Ratoath residents. Parents remarked on what they characterised as *the country attitude* in the local school. This denoted a more personal, one-on-one, friendly approach to teaching and parental contact. In their experience, this personal touch was largely missing from Dublin schools. A participant in a Mother and Toddler discussion group remarked that she liked the *ruralness of the place*, especially the green fields and the fact that it was *not all concrete*. Comments such as these suggest that it is a kind of *suburban pastoralism* to which people in Ratoath are attached, rather than to the countryside itself. The idea of Ratoath as a pastoral retreat configured around a small rural village, to which many respondents adhere, is directly contradicted by the physical reality of contiguous suburban estates extending along all approach roads out into the surrounding countryside.

Unfettered development impacts in particular on children who see the green spaces in and around their homes disappear, along with the opportunity for carving out their own social spaces within the locality. In



Ratoath

describing the place where they live local children utilise a rural/urban continuum, positively evaluating the former and negatively evaluating the latter. In short, the respondents did not want Ratoath to be *Dublin*. A keen understanding of the consequences of poor planning was demonstrated by a sixth class pupil from Ratoath National School:

Ratoath is growing nearly too fast. It's a friendly town with a huge population. There used to be green fields around Ratoath, not any more. It's just filled up with estates. I would like to see the building of estates stop before we join up with other towns. Take for example Malahide, it used to be like Ratoath except much bigger but estates and buildings flowed in and now Malahide and a nearby town called Swords are joined together. I don't want to see that happen to Ratoath

Increasingly, suburban pastoralism must be expressed in symbolic rather than substantive ways. For the locals, it is the rural *look and feel* and history of the place (rather than its materiality) that connotes pastoralism. Interestingly, the rhetoric deployed in the property press provides a useful insight into how this pastoral ideology is harnessed, maintained and reproduced for those living in the locality, and those who might consider living there. The language and imagery deployed by estate agents reinforce the idea of Ratoath as an up-market, rural retreat from the city, as the following excerpts from www.daft.ie website demonstrates:

Steeplechase, one of Ratoath's most sought after estates, is ideally located, with rural surroundings, yet still only minutes walk from the village.

Located in the secluded modern parkland setting of Somerville, Ratoath Village, is the original 4-bed end of terrace show-house of this much sought after development. This spacious and well-presented 3-storey property is situated in an ideal location for a perfect mix of a quaint country village living with the amenities and facilities for modern living still within touching distance.

Suburban pastoralism does not define Leixlip residents' experience of place to the same extent. While village atmosphere appeared as one of the features that defined the place for our survey respondents, *country feel* did not emerge as a significant theme. This is perhaps not surprising given that Leixlip has a long history as a small urban place, with an established main street and small business community.

Instead, the dominant themes were friendliness, quietness and community sense - all factors associated with pleasant small-town living. It is noteworthy, however, that the history and heritage of the place emerged as a significant theme and source of self-definition among residents in Leixlip, suggesting that the visual presence of heritage in the built environment provides an alternative pastoral backdrop to which people may become attached.

Many respondents in Leixlip and Ratoath saw their suburbs as a gateway from the city to the countryside. This is suggestive of idea of a *middle landscape* – a place that permits access to nature but also is accessible to the facilities and infrastructures associated with dense settlements,^v as the following quotations from our survey demonstrate:

I've lived in Co. Meath all my life. I believe I have the best of both worlds. A semi-rural location with the city of Dublin on my doorstep.

Putting it in more literary terms, the middle landscape of Leixlip was characterised by another respondent in terms of two iconic Irish writers both representing different traditions:

Leixlip is a cross between J.B. Keane and Brendan Behan, a mix of the two, country and Dublin, rural and urban.

Whereas for Ratoath residents the presence of green fields proves that it is in the country, for Leixlip residents the *country attitude* inheres in the quality of local relationships and the nature of local organisations that have evolved over time. One focus group participant in Leixlip suggested that her neighbours were from the country, but they had managed to take *the country* with them into suburbia. Another informant suggested that the sustainability of a suburb such as Leixlip was largely predicated on the rural ethos of the new population:

Huge numbers of people were cleared out of rural Ireland and dumped on the outskirts of Dublin. What saved those communities was that people were rural – people were used to having to do for themselves.... [I]n Leixlip, people's backgrounds were rural, people would get out and mow the public greens, they would look after the maintenance, taking pleasure in hacking down a bush. The residents' association reflected this rural and small town ethos of mucking in and doing things....

The evidence seems to indicate that Ratoath residents – largely upper middle-class people, most of whom are at a relatively early stage of family-formation - had actively bought into the pastoral idyll that this “new” suburb appeared to provide, at least partly on the grounds that it offered the opportunity for a better family life in a country setting. However, as more and more people have sought to avail of Ratoath's ‘country living’, the more difficult it has become to attain. In Leixlip with its longer history as a suburb, its somewhat older age profile and greater diversity in family and occupational structure, residents perceived the place where they live to be pleasantly unexceptional and were generally positive about quality of life. Nevertheless, even in Leixlip, a well-established suburb, there is concern about the long-term sustainability of the community, as one GAA activist recounted.



Adamstown

The committees are all aging and that is a dangerous thing. So many people involved are over 50 years, and there is the usual grumble, where are the young people, why aren't they involved. For the thing to pass on you need a more balanced age structure. You can't really expect people in their 20s to be involved, but there should be people in their 30s and 40s. The worry is, that if the current committee “retires” the thing won't go on. People are not getting involved in sufficient numbers to secure things into the future.

Leixlip has benefited greatly from years of activism and advocacy by the Leixlip pioneers. However, given the kind of busy lives that Irish people are now living^{vi} the question of sustainability and the role of volunteers becomes a more pressing one.

Cities derive their sense of place at least in part from symbolic markers that help groups to identify the city and also provide a means of personal identification with the city.^{vii} It appears that in the suburbs this process of collective representation through symbolic markers is also heavily relied upon for helping to delineate an inclusive suburban community. The images and representations of a place like Ratoath (relying heavily on nature) and Leixlip (relying on heritage and community) help to create common background referents for suburban dwellers, and crucially help to inculcate a sense of place.

Suburban mobilities

The suburbanisation of Dublin raises important questions about suburban sprawl. There is a well developed literature, for example, on the impact of long commuting hours on social capital in communities. In our study, the amount of time spent commuting was not a simple function of distance from the city centre. Employed respondents in Ratoath were more likely to spend half an hour more commuting to work than their counterparts in Leixlip and Mullingar, despite the latter's image as a long-distance dormitory town for commuters to Dublin. It has been suggested that, in polycentric urban regions, couples with school-aged children seek out opportunities for local, part-time work for women as part of a family-work strategy. This was confirmed by one of our key informants in Mullingar, who said it was common for women from Dublin, who lived in the new estates and whose husbands worked in the city, to seek part-time work. In general, however, while couples with children were significantly more likely to have a breadwinner or modified breadwinner family work strategy in each of our study locations, there was no clearly related *family commuting strategy* whereby one employed partner travelled for longer than the other.

We asked respondents to identify where they went to access a defined set of facilities, such as pubs, restaurants, shops, sports, post office, bank, and so on. Local facilities represented more than half of all facilities used by our respondents in each study location. Not surprisingly, given their distance from the greater Dublin area and the size of the adjoining provincial town, respondents in the Mullingar estates accessed more than ninety percent of all the facilities they used locally. In the other three study areas people were much more likely to be mobile in accessing goods and services.

Respondents in Lucan-Esker used a higher percentage of facilities in Dublin city, whilst respondents in Ratoath used a higher percentage of facilities on the M50, that is, the *beltway* surrounding the city with

its associated shopping malls and retail parks. People living in Ratoath tended to commute between Ratoath (local community, sports, recreation), Blanchardstown (shopping, entertainment) and the towns of Ashbourne, Navan and Dunshaughlin (facilities such as swimming pool, library, doctors surgeries). Just over 40% did their supermarket shopping in Blanchardstown, while more than two-thirds went to the cinema there. On the other hand, the majority of respondents use the shop, pub and restaurant facilities within Ratoath.

A similar pattern was identified for Leixlip with locals moving within a radius that included Leixlip (doctors surgeries, post office, sports, recreation) Lucan, Maynooth (shopping) and the Liffey Valley Centre (entertainment). For example, while 35% use supermarket facilities within Leixlip, 20% travelled to Lucan to do so and a further 15% went to Maynooth. Almost half of the sample went to the cinema at Liffey Valley, with only 10% travelling to Dublin to do so. Those under 40 years were more likely to use facilities along the M50 if they were living in either Ratoath or Leixlip. As in Ratoath, the majority of respondents in Leixlip patronise the local shops, pubs and restaurants. Interestingly, 43% of people use public transport, which is of a relatively high standard in Leixlip, while the negligible levels of public transport in Ratoath ensure that it is barely used at all.

In summary, where our suburban residents travelled to access employment and facilities varied according to the location of the study area, and to individual or family life-stage. Whilst nominally part of the ex-urban fringe surrounding the greater Dublin metropolitan area, as a substantial provincial town Mullingar provided respondents in its new suburban estates with all the facilities they needed locally. Leixlip's identity as a mature suburb comprised of somewhat older and younger inhabitants without children meant that on average, our respondents were more likely to have shorter commuting times, and to use a greater proportion of local facilities than those in Lucan-Esker or Ratoath.

Overall, it is clear that in pursuit of a suburban way of life, the metropolitan downtown is to a considerable extent sidelined. People express very little orientation to the city, instead operating within mobile circuits that take them to outlying towns and villages or to outlets located along major motorways. In describing their perfect day out, very few of the children in the four suburban locations expressed an interest in visiting any city centre facility. Rather, they wanted to visit adventure centres, shopping malls, skateboard and motor tracks all of which facilities are located on the perimeter of the city. So a spatial pattern emerges of commuting between different satellite or small towns in order to fulfill everyday social, personal and recreational needs. In the process, the city and the facilities it offers are circumvented. This exacerbates the polarisation and fragmentation of the urban community already underway as a result of the proliferation of shopping malls on the city's outskirts. Furthermore, it suggests a new kind of urban living, *poly-nucleated conurbation*, in which the metropolitan core no longer exerts the same pull on people. Instead, people become commuters between different nodes on the outskirts of cities to satisfy their work and leisure needs. This clearly has implications for the provision of services both in the city centre and in the suburbs in the years to come.

Given the dependence on car culture particularly in newer suburbs such as Ratoath, it is not surprising that we recorded considerable anxiety about the impact of traffic on the locality. The quaint country lanes



Adamstown

that lead in and out of the village are choked with traffic taking short cuts from Navan to the M50. Twenty-eight percent of our survey respondents identified traffic as one of the things they most disliked about living in Ratoath, and fully half of all respondents identified it as one of the main problems in the locality. A similar number identified the absence of infrastructure as a significant problem. Indeed there is little or no possibility of cycling or walking with safety between the housing estates and the village. In contrast, the older suburban estates in Leixlip and Lucan afforded children much greater freedom to walk and cycle around their neighbourhoods without fear, and short cuts could be taken between estates. Many estates can be accessed without going onto a main road. As one child in Leixlip remarked:

I like living here because you can go places by yourself. In England you can't go anywhere by yourself. You can't just go out and about by yourself.

Being able to move safely around the neighbourhood liberated these children from dependence on a car for transport, and helped them to develop confidence about inhabiting the public spaces in their localities.

Despite the characterisation of life in Ratoath as peaceful, quiet and rural, there is a counter-discourse that expresses high levels of anxiety in relation to the safety of children and the impact of traffic and poor infrastructure on quality of life. The village, and surrounding roads are choked with traffic from early morning to late evening, and life is extremely difficult if not impossible for pedestrians. Parents residing in one local estate had to drive their children the one hundred meters distance to school because there was no safe footpath that the children could traverse. Numerous accidents have occurred in the locality. Older pedestrians and young children were seen as particularly vulnerable. Older respondents reported that they "can't cross the road" anymore and that it is "dangerous to leave your house" as a result. Children in the local national school wrote of their own fears in relation to their road safety and repeatedly made reference to traffic accidents in the locality.

The awareness of and sensitivity to risk shapes the discourses that emerge around children and childhood. Canadian ex-urbanites see the benefits of moving out of the city in terms of the higher visibility of their children, the mutuality of guardianship in the community and the greater safety.¹⁶ The possibility of safety for the children of Ratoath has been negated by the poor planning that has resulted in heavy traffic volume through the village, and the lack of provision for pedestrians and cyclists. The autonomy of local children is also compromised by their dependence on being ferried about in cars. To avail of almost any recreational activity they must be driven by parents. Ironically, moving out of the city and into a rural location does not seem to have altered to any significant degree parent's anxieties in relation to their children's safety, and indeed, through their own everyday living strategies they contribute to the problem.

Conclusion

A feature of modernity that impinges on our concept of place is the idea that society and economy are no longer organised around local relations. For this reason, it has been argued that 'it is meaningless in modern urban contexts to talk about communities in the sense of self-sufficient social units.'^{ix} Nevertheless, this does not mean that local attachments based on familiarity with and attachment to place cannot exist. In fact, our case studies of suburbia demonstrate the continuing relevance of place attachment and its perceived importance to quality of life. The data gathered in the course of our research bears out Rustin's argument that much of human experience does not transcend but rather continues to be bound by time and space constraints:

Even though mobility and choice of place has grown, territorial locations remain nodes of association and continuity, bounding cultures and communities.

However, we cannot discount the fact that people also recognise and worry about the fact that their places are changing and that they perceive themselves to have little or no control over the direction of that change. The built and natural environment that acts as an important signifier of place may be obliterated by development, which proceeds unabated. As public spaces disappear there will be fewer 'meeting places' for promoting civil interactions. The local structure of feeling that binds people together and furnishes them with a sense of place may become attenuated over time, as people find themselves spending more time in cars in pursuit of goods and services. In such circumstances, the ideology of suburban pastoralism – connoting ruralness and community – will become increasingly difficult to sustain.

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Superbia. A suburban future?

GARY LYSAGHT

In 2004 the population of Ireland reached 4 millionⁱ for the first time since 1871 and current predictions from Eurostat suggest that by 2030 the population will reach 5.6 million.ⁱⁱ This together with expected more modest increases in Northern Ireland will have returned the population to close to pre-famine levels with up to 40% of this projected growth to come from ongoing immigration,ⁱⁱⁱ an ironic inversion of the previous 150 years of almost continuous emigration. The impact on Irish society, which is hardly lessened by the recent slow down and possible imminent reversal, has already resulted in a very different Ireland and Irish people. The steady influx augmented by high birth rates and returning emigrants precipitated an explosion in housing over the last 15 years which has had a dramatic physical as well as social impact on the island. The question of how and where all of these people were to be housed has hardly been discussed and there has been precious little debate about what sort of society is being created beyond a simplistic discussion of Boston versus Berlin. Blinded by economic success we have allowed our surroundings to evolve largely from free market pressures rather than from concerns of place making or considerations of social inclusion. These questions that are fundamental to the future of housing policy and community development have only recently been seriously discussed. The relationship between housing, transport and energy-use have come centre stage replacing house prices as the main topic of casual conversation and radio talk shows. This shift has been prompted perhaps by the credit crisis, which has all but wiped out the house building sector and speculation on oil, which has brought home the real cost of low building standards and an over-reliance on the car. Now that the manic pace of the Celtic Tiger has slowed and thrift is back in fashion, there may be time and an inclination to look at alternative solutions to our housing model.

Even with the crash in housing output there may still be around 35,000 dwellings built in 2009^{iv} to cater for replacement of inadequate housing, falling population per dwelling and in particular to cater for the social and affordable sectors - equivalent to 1,750 acres or 7sqkm given a density of 20 units to the acre. Despite the fall-off in immigration, where and how these dwellings will be built is still an important question.



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Housing

In the first generation since Ireland became a predominantly urban society there is still a strong connection with the land. The dream of living in a house with a front and back garden, of having a place to park the car and somewhere safe for the kids to play is still a powerful motivation. Over 90% of Irish people live in single family houses^v and in the last five years, when Ireland experienced an exceptional housing output, over 75% of newly built accommodation was made up of houses.^{vi} Low density and land hungry, this type of development has been pushed further out from the city by increased urban land prices and low urban densities, increasingly further from services, schools and places of work. The flexibility and ease of access afforded by the car has resulted in inappropriate suburban type development throughout rural Ireland, without access to amenities or the possibility of supporting a viable social structure. It is clearly not without reason that Ireland's approach to planning and development over the last twenty years and the resultant uncontrolled sprawl has been labeled by the European Environment Agency as an example of 'the worst case scenario'^{vii}.

This sprawl has particularly afflicted Dublin. It's economic preeminence distorts the demographic and pushes the political and physical boundaries of *Greater Dublin* half way across the country ballooning into a bloated Meta-City sprawling over the neighboring counties of Meath, Kildare and Wicklow despite persistent local resistance. Much of this city zone is comprised of local communities overlaid and over-run by the relentless expansion of Dublin's dormitory housing and the attendant flood of commuter traffic and impending gridlock. Much of this housing is built at a density of 8 to 12 units to the acre, which is too low to provide services but not low enough to prevent the urbanisation of the country with footpaths, streetlights and the destruction of hedgerows.

In Dublin however, only 16% of housing consists of apartments and the population within the city continues to drop in favour of increased urbanisation of outlying towns, many accessible only by car. This triumph of 'personal freedom' has been endorsed by successive government transport policies as evidenced by recent National Development Plans^{viii} where much-trumpeted investment in public transport, particularly rail, is dwarfed by investment in private transport, namely roads. Yet this is in the face of incontrovertible evidence that global warming is happening and that emissions from transport, along with domestic energy use, are a major factor in climate change.^{ix} The government signed the Kyoto Agreement and has been advised by public bodies such as SEI, Teagasc and the ESRI, as well as a host of pressure groups and professional bodies, that lack of commitment to tackling poor planning is the biggest contributor. Instead, Ireland is setting aside hundreds of millions of euro over the next ten years to pay fines for failing to meet Kyoto commitments on CO² emissions.^x In 2004 Ireland was already 10% above commitments to limit increases to 13% above 1990 levels^{xi} - a short term strategy which may have seemed credible during an economic boom but must also be sustained through recession, resulting in the squandering of resources which could be better used in tackling the problem directly.

The end of cheap oil^{xii} and the need for energy security should be sufficient to suggest that a radical review of transport and its influence on housing and urbanism is now required.

Transport

Currently Ireland is the most car-dependant country in the world. This can be partially explained by our relatively low car ownership and also by the large population per dwelling, which means that each car is called upon by more people, but the single largest factor is the lack of public transport. 96% of transport in Ireland is by road and only 4% by rail, compared to a EU average of 61%. Our cities are choked by commuter traffic cyclically ebbing and flowing with the working day. Within the city it can take longer to travel across the city than to commute from surrounding counties, making long distance commuting a viable option. Once you are committed to the car, distance becomes irrelevant and time is the only determinant.

Our road network, having been neglected for decades, is in need of massive investment. Any integrated transport network will require road as well as rail systems. Currently the rail network is limited and based largely on single-track layouts with the result that potential for commuter rail can only be at the expense of intercity services. With a country as small as Ireland a serious investment in faster train connections can make commuting a countrywide proposition, reducing the dependence on Greater Dublin as a housing and business location. Adamstown has successfully exploited its proximity to Dublin and to the rail network in its development as a high-density new town that is clearly an important model for future housing. The limited rail network may suggest a limited application but the same principle is being employed by the Metro North scheme in Swords, based on light rail where the proposed extension of the Metro line past Dublin Airport may serve as a catalyst for high-density urbanism. This follows international examples such as Orestad in Copenhagen or Q-City in Hong Kong among others, which suggest that success comes from building (or at least committing to) the rail first, then the housing - a lesson that is finally being learned here. Higher densities are necessary to provide economies of scale and the concentrations necessary to support hospitals, theatre, concert halls, sports arenas and much of the other social infrastructure that is so lacking in this country. Light rail has in the LUAS a huge advantage in terms of prestige but compared even to bus it is inflexible, slow to develop and relatively expensive. Bogotá, a city with a population twice that of the whole island of Ireland relies on a fast efficient bus network based on super bus lanes. Another model, 'TransMilenio', is now being looked at in a number of African cities as an affordable system based neither on the car or public transport but on the quality of environment for the citizens.^{xiii} Unfortunately, much of urban and suburban Ireland has been developed at densities that are too low to support any public transport, even bus.

Cars are currently using the majority of oil consumed in this country and producing a significant proportion of the overall CO² yet the technology exists already to make significant improvements. Hybrid cars can reduce petrol use by 50% and CO² emissions by 70% compared to a similar sized petrol car. Even these reductions are too small however, if the car is to play a large part in future transport. 25,000km per car per year is unsustainable. Local networks based on walking, cycling or, if necessary, driving, connected to long-distance rail and bus networks are required to cope with existing suburban densities and to establish higher though still low rural densities. Accepting that more efficient cars or car sharing has a role to play makes more sense than expecting to provide a public system that can reach all corners of the country - half empty buses are worse than most cars. Electric cars are extremely viable for short journeys and are already a daily sight in London where they are exempt from congestion charges. With incentives and their low running cost, they could become a common sight recharging from solar panels at park and ride facilities all over the commuter belt.

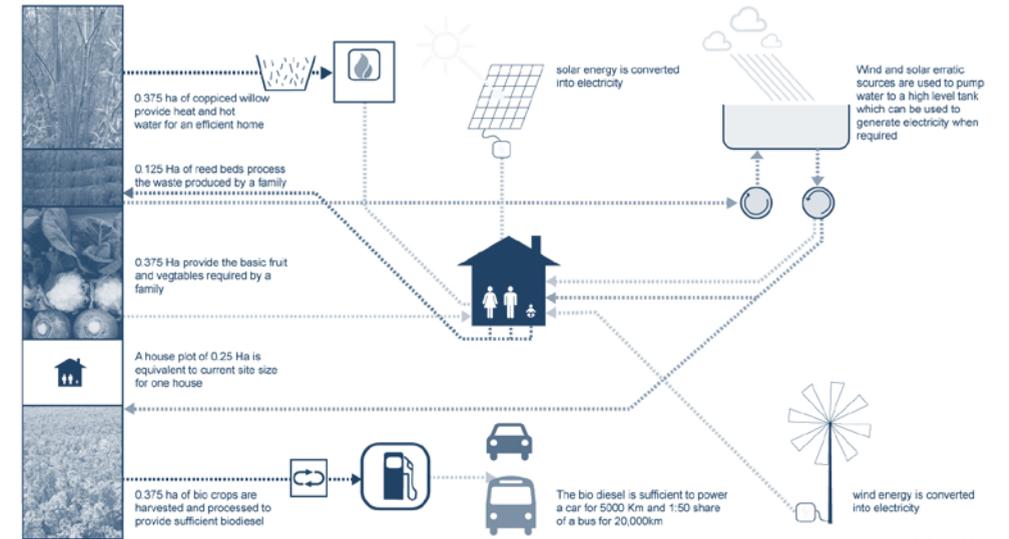
ENERGY

91% of our energy is imported with 56% supplied by oil - making us the 7th most oil-dependent economy in the world.^{xiv} Long before the oil runs out, the effect of the necessity for large economies such as the US and the emerging super-economies of China and India to secure their energy supply will demand a disproportionate share at the expense of small globalised economies at the furthest reaches of the energy network. The recent price spikes due to speculation have shown clearly the impact of rising energy costs and this can only get worse when the supply is seen to be running out. Arguments calling for reductions in energy use and CO² production in developing economies as a response cut little ice in the face of the tangible possibility of attaining the lifestyle we in the first world, have enjoyed for many decades. The solution, at least in the short term will have to be home grown.

Although we are uniquely well placed to do so, Ireland only derives 2.7% of its energy from renewable sources.^{xv} Access to wind, wave and tide are all amongst the best in the world and our mild, wet climate ensures fast growth cycles ideal for extracting energy from biomass and bio-fuels. Evidence of the importance of bio-fuel to continued car use can be seen in the recent food inflation caused by a rapid shift from food crops as fuel prices rose, a trend set to continue with a projected significant transfer of European and American agricultural land to bio-fuels in the next 30 years.^{xvi} America has already subsidised ethanol production from grain with a view to replacing 15% of petrol use by 2017.^{xvii} Investment by National Toll Roads in bio-fuel refinement and a joint venture with *Virgin* on aviation bio-fuel indicates a farsighted plan to continue a profitable transport business after the oil has gone.^{xviii} This desire to continue unabated has already, in a remarkably short period of time unbalanced world agriculture and placed transport in direct opposition to food production. A change is required in the fundamental paradigm of unrestricted car use and cheap imported food or this crisis is set to deepen.

To consider a shift to bio-fuel, as a primary energy source for transport in Ireland would require 5 million hectares - approximately 2/3 of the landmass of the country - to be turned over to bio-fuel production just to meet our current car use. If you consider not just the transport energy but also the ecological footprint to supply all of the energy, food and goods we consume each year the equivalent of 6.2 hectares for each person in the country would be required, which would take a country 5 times the size of Ireland.^{xix}

Currently domestic energy-use accounts for 23% of all energy-use in the country; 40% of which is required for home heating.^{xx} In a country with a mild, temperate climate where winter temperatures rarely drop below zero and summers are mild enough to make air-conditioning unnecessary, it is feasible and practical to make significant improvements in energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. Irish houses produce 97% more CO² than the EU average,^{xxi} which may be partially explained by our higher density per household and our predominance of houses relative to apartments. But it is surely more of an indication of how low our building standards have been. Passive houses are still very rare in Ireland compared to Austria or Scandinavia, where temperature ranges are far greater. The recent Passive House Design Guide from SEI highlights the fact that it would be much easier to achieve this standard here. It will, however, require a significant shift in the way buildings are built and to date it is owner-occupier home builders who are pursuing this option, as the benefits are direct, rather than the volume house builders where the economic benefit is as yet unquantifiable.



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It may also be significant that 22% of electricity, more than all the energy required for domestic use, is lost just in transmitting it through the network,^{xxii} and the centralised energy system in Ireland is highly inefficient. Power stations burning peat operate at approximately 37% efficiency and gas at 57%, compared to domestic gas or wood pellet boilers at over 80%.^{xxiii} Indeed, even though high-density housing is more efficient in terms of heating costs there is no saving in electricity use unless it is generated nearby. In urban areas, smaller scale local combined heat and power plants, burning carbon-neutral vegetable oil, grain, wood-chip, miscanthus or rapeseed would be far more efficient than our current reliance on oil and much easier to change in the future to reflect a shifting supply matrix. However, given that it is possible to all but eliminate heating costs, this suggests that individual self-sufficient, off-grid housing, where energy for heating and power are generated directly by the occupier, may be an efficient option. Losses in transmission are practically eliminated and the direct benefit of conservation measures can be recouped by the occupier. Given the recent changes to grid connection rules, wind turbines and photovoltaics could turn every household into suppliers rather than consumers of power. This self-sufficiency is more achievable in dispersed development where there is more surface area to extract energy and the nuisance associated with turbines and turbulence caused by neighbouring buildings less extreme. The land can be called upon for its productive potential, to produce energy crops and food - close to the point of consumption, thereby eliminating 'food miles'. The issue of transport is the only pitfall as energy use for transport to rural areas may potentially offset savings.

Addressing this problem however, brings us full circle, from a situation currently where the proliferation of low-density housing is seen as a pressing problem for society, to a situation where it is a model that may provide an answer to energy security and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the future. Relatively quick reduction in CO² would give an immediate and ongoing return, rewarding rapid implementation. These technologies will become increasingly affordable as oil and gas become more scarce and expensive and the model of benign exploitation of natural resources that put Ireland to the forefront of hydroelectric and peat extraction early in the twentieth century could be repeated. Greater investment now in research into alternative energies and oil replacement technologies - such as plastics from vegetable starch - could pay dividends in the future as the basis of indigenous industries of self sufficiency.



DENSITY

Agriculture, though low in energy use, contributes 27% to national greenhouse gas emissions^{xxiv}. Beef, which accounts for 60% of agricultural production produces significant methane emissions and is the least efficient means of producing calories. To have a dairy industry, there will inevitably be a certain amount of beef for food. A reduction in meat consumption, however, which might help with our burgeoning obesity problem, would free up land for growing food and fuel to reduce our dependence on imports or perhaps simply to provide places to live. The current argument would seem to be that to reduce 'bungalow blitz' and commuter traffic, with all of the attendant emissions and energy use, the future lies in departing the countryside, leaving it to organic farming and concentrating the population in high density, energy efficient, urban centers served by integrated public transport based on the European model. This approach is enshrined in planning policies that restrict rural repopulation without 'local need', at a time when rural populations are falling and is reflected in An Taisce's objection to one-off rural housing^{xxv}. Since the City Quays Project and Group 91's pioneering work to save the city from terminal decline the consensus has been growing among architects, and increasingly planners, that the European city with its urban spaces and horizontally-zoned city blocks is the answer to our housing and societal needs. But in Ireland for the last 15 years while the city centers have been rebuilt and re-energised, the suburbs have been exploding unheeded and unchallenged.

The historic city throughout Europe is becoming increasingly ossified by conservation and tourism. More than nine million tourists visited Ireland in 2007 making it one of the most significant industries in the country and one with enormous influence and importance.^{xxvi} Unlike the traditional view of tourists as plaid-wearing Americans, visitors are now young, European, flying Ryanair and coming to foreign cities for weekend breaks. They are in search of an immediate, unique and identifiable product. This imposes a pressure to retain an historic scale and uniqueness of character to compete with other weekend break destinations, a process complemented by an increasing awareness of conservation and the irreplaceable value of historic buildings. Coupled with a rapidly diminishing stock of urban development land, this makes significant increases in urban core populations unlikely in the short term as the traditional centres evolve into cultural, retail and leisure locations.

The 2006 census indicates a drop in urban population in a number of Irish cities including Dublin, relative to an overall increase in urban dwellers.^{xxvii} Urban centers are losing populations due to transfer of traditional inner city flat land to single family occupation and stagnation in mobility in older suburbs. This coupled with a concentration on home ownership among those in their twenties, has driven suburban advancement, based on an evolution of the same two storey house model.

Single people and couples without children are living in 3-4 bedroom houses and choosing to commute rather than to live in apartments in urban centers. This is clearly a response to the cost and inadequacy of many of the apartments built in the last 15 years but is also a reflection of a national belief in the importance of land ownership. As an innately rural people, there is a reaction against the noise pollution and congestion of the city. There is little tradition of urban dwelling or design of public urban spaces to alleviate the pressures of high-density urban living. The classic Georgian squares are fragments of an idealised arcadia rather than the great gathering places of the European city and their continuation as parks can be seen perhaps as anti-urban, an attempt to make the urban more rural.

The ideal in this post agrarian society is still a house in an open field but increasingly the compromise is a field of houses with no option but to drive to the nearest petrol station for basic supplies. A situation that is as common in suburbia as in the countryside, yet many people choose to live in suburbia and enjoy the lifestyle it gives them. The relative seclusion and independence of this sub-rural life still has a very strong attraction for many Irish people. We are not unique in this preference for our own front door and ground under our feet but the lack of public transport to serve this dispersed population sets us apart. The cost of spending up to two hours a day behind the wheel is not being taken into account when considering the cost of suburban housing.

Ireland is a small country with a small population and has one of the lowest population densities in Europe at 51 persons per sqkm, compared with a EU average of 142.^{xxviii} The problem is not that we are running out of land or increasingly building in the countryside, but the manner in which we are doing it. Many of the social issues associated with rural isolation, and falling rural populations would be ameliorated by a return to higher rural densities. Problems associated with an increase in housing in the countryside; visual intrusion, waste and traffic could all be addressed by a return to a productive engagement with the land rather than the current parasitic one where land is valued for its housing rather than its productive potential.

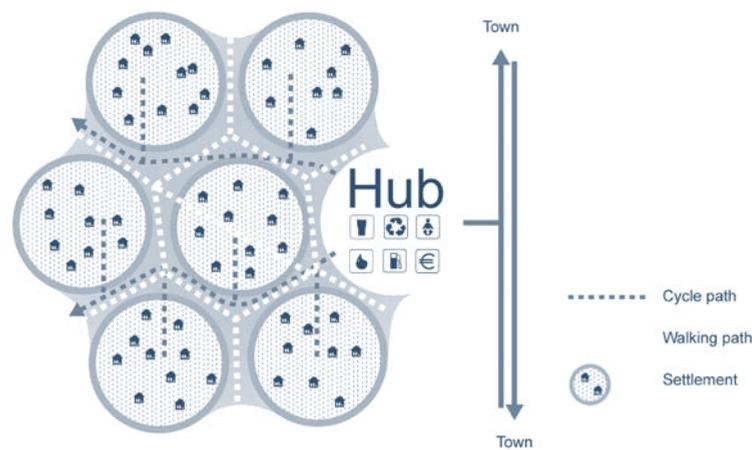
In pre-famine times the country supported a population that was almost twice its current level and, though the standard of living was much lower and people did not travel, all of their demands were met by what the land could produce. Now almost nothing is expected of the land other than that it look nice and provide places for housing. Unfortunately, these characteristics seem to be mutually exclusive. The requirement for food and energy security will inevitably require the land to once again provide the means of supporting the basic needs of the population. A model of suburbanisation of the countryside, where housing and farming coexist and bring benefits to both populations, may be the logical next step. After all, the landscape that we like to think of as natural has in fact been created over six millennia by the actions of humankind for its own ends.^{xxix}

Superb-ia

Much of recent housing output has been in the suburban/ex-urban grey land, which surrounds every town and city in the country. Without access to a car or even two these areas may become unviable as places to live. As fuel prices spiral, suburban growth will be re-shaped by the twin fuels of sustainable energy and available public transport, trends that are already emerging, separately. An over-view is needed to connect systems of transport, energy and housing, one which would concentrate less on the differences between urban, rural and sub-urban and more on the similarities.

To cope with demand for housing and a still rising population, a super-urban condition will need to be encouraged along new light rail corridors running across the grain of the city to exploit brown field pockets within the city, intensification of suburbia and outwards into agricultural land. The extent of these development fingers will be determined by commuting time and not by location or distance. They will provide connectivity to the urban core and also access to the countryside via narrow development corridors determined by cycle or walking distances to the light rail stops.

Built at sufficient scale, these shallow zones will provide the population density capable of supporting essential health, cultural and leisure services, and will be powered by local CHP plants using a holistic mix of available energy sources, supplied from the surrounding environment. Similar processes of concentration are already emerging in suburbia where supermarkets are expanding to provide the services traditionally provided by urban villages. A greater focus on connecting these emerging nodes to the bus system could provide the increased population that would promote further provision of services and make higher suburban densities credible. Recent research shows that the effectiveness of supermarkets in stock control may make them more energy efficient than a trip to the farmers market, suggesting that other counter-intuitive structures may emerge to challenge our preconceptions.



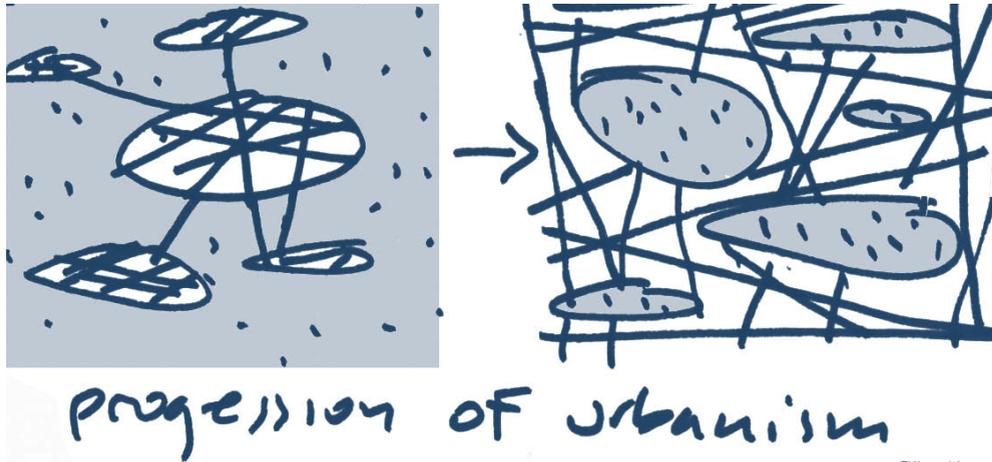
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By revaluing the land for its productive potential, even the wasteful land use in suburbia can be returned to productivity, making this more truly a blend of urban and rural. Wasteland and under-utilised public open space can provide allotments and orchards and limited fuel crops can be grown along road margins. Industrial and retail zones can exploit their unused roof spaces to provide solar energy arrays, hydroponics farms and leisure facilities where they can benefit from the access to daylight and the accidental topography. A golf course on the roof of a shopping centre, for instance, a basketball court over a petrol station or a public park on a warehouse could be the positive benefits of greater urban density. This open space resource can allow the redevelopment of existing marginal public open space with high-density high-rise on limited available footprint to enrich the building type and increase overall population.

A softer and more 'natural' environment would be established based on hybridisation rather than segregation and a whole new generation of urban living 'farmers' would emerge. The result would be a blurring of the distinction between the rural and the suburban as one becomes more densely populated and the other becomes more intensively cultivated.

In parallel, in areas where existing rail does not exist or the potential for high densities which will support light rail is not available, a lower density self-sufficient condition based on the road network will expand to become the connective tissue between urban centers, acting as a support network for a reinvigorated sustainable and productive countryside. Local networks based on car, bike or walking, connected to park and ride transport interchanges and served by quality bus corridors can be encouraged by changing one lane of motorways and dual carriageways to bus lanes. Locating these interchanges along the road network promotes and supports a shallow 3km deep *Hinterland* zone each side of the road that would provide a population density of 700 people per km of self-sufficient housing. The interchange between these local and district networks can become the basis of new local communities, by providing the population density, all be it a transient one, to support cultural, sporting, leisure and commercial facilities at a local level. Using the existing and proposed road network and locating these interchanges close to housing - rather than the current practice of placing them at the city centre fringe - would reshape the map of urban density on the basis of accessibility rather than proximity.

Within a maximum 5 minute drive, 20 minute cycle or 40 minute walk from these centres a settlement structure based on existing field patterns subdivided into 1.5Ha plots would be laid out, which would support a population of 4,500 people, equivalent to a medium sized Irish town. Organised in strips - to allow for cultivation by landowners, subcontractors or local farmers, on an individual or collective basis - each plot would provide an integrated network of food production, waste treatment and energy production sufficient to cope with the basic needs of a family of 3. Coppiced willow, rapeseed and miscanthus would be grown as a fuel source for domestic energy and would allow 5,000km per year by car and a share in 20,000km by bus. Fruit and vegetables would be grown for basic food and reed beds would be established to deal with waste. These intensively farmed strips with housing, as an integral part rather than superimposed and formed into clusters, would be separated by feral landscape connected by footpaths and bikeways to both the local hubs and the countryside.



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A technologically enabled self-sufficient indigenous rural population can emerge (not just to service a mechanised organic agriculture), providing food and bio-fuel for distant cities that have a choice to commute, work at home or on the land. Clusters of housing and commuter farms, where the land provides the means for mobility, would allow the re-establishment of local populations within safe walking distance of a pub and shop and at sufficient density to make them economically viable. This rural population will have access to transport and services and places to live and work which are accessible to both historic core and countryside. These settlements would be very low density by urban standards, but this measure is almost irrelevant as the land is still productive and not exclusively for housing, yet can still provide for a new population of over 600,000, self-sufficiently. ^{xxxi}

You only have to look back to 1980, the year that the Sony Walkman first emerged, to realise what social and technological changes may emerge in the next 30 years. Personal computers, access to the Internet, DVDs and mobile phones have all come into daily use in that time and changed our daily lives immensely. Yet they have had little direct effect on our built environment. Similar changes are required of our cities, countryside and suburbia if we are to cope with the challenges to come. It is possible that a number of generations will be needed before the Irish become truly urbanised in a cultural rather than a statistical sense. In the meantime, the appeal of suburbia and the reason for its success (or relative lack of failure) will persist. Lessons must be learned from the way we currently build and some understanding of the reasons that lead people to value a house, which requires several hours commute every day, over an apartment served by public transport. A radical cultural shift is required to make this transition and a continuing focus on imported models of high-density urbanism to the exclusion of all others, leads only to inevitable entropy.

Architects need to be at the forefront in proposing humane solutions or the market will continue to decide on the basis of profit alone.

The issues raised by global warming and consequent technological developments have the potential to fundamentally reinvent Architecture and Urbanism. New technologies and construction methods that emerged at the end of the 19th Century gave rise to the Modernist Movement, which attempted to use new technology to address the failures of the traditional city. Likewise, we are now at a point when urgent action is required to address issues that affect all of society, and even all of mankind. This makes the challenge far more important than purely intellectual or aesthetic concerns. Architects unique ability to imagine and understand how things can be, means that they need to propose ideas and engage in debate about how we should build for a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable society.

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Sanctuary + Congregation

GERRY CAHILL

Being an Architect is to be faced with many opportunities to create meaningful space for people to occupy and enjoy. Whether it is the design of the smallest domestic extension or a collection of homes or a place to work, a place to learn or be cared for, to view art, to listen to music, to share or be alone we face the challenge to do our best within the context of the system, site, and budget. Driven by inspiration the process of realisation is often daunting – fraught with the vagaries of compliance with statutory requirements and the frustrations and inefficiencies of the building industry. Battle weariness often accompanies the completion of any project with the accompanying need to move on, re-energise and start the process of design over again. Rarely do we get the chance to seriously revisit the places we have been involved in making – to experience the lives these spaces now have - formed in part through our creative input but now enlivened and transformed by their users. So the opportunities afforded by involvement in the 11th Venice International Architectural Biennale - curated by Natalie Weadick and Hugh Campbell - have created a unique eddy in the day to day stream of consciousness and work; an opportunity to pause and reflect; to revisit a place made over time that is now generating its own life and character; a place that we were involved in making but in which we now have no further immediately defined role; a place that is home for others but where we remain welcomed; a place where we can join in the congregation of different inhabitants whilst sharing in the sense of sanctuary afforded.



Being asked to somehow review and appreciate the new world of Sophia Housing at the Mercy Convent in Cork Street through the medium of film was daunting. Film, as a medium, was way beyond our comfort zone. I say 'was' because to understand and see the sense of a place through film – rather than through drawings or models – is so liberating as a way to work that I find myself wondering how we can continue to use film in our practice as architects. Hardly surprising, I suppose, given how strong the impact of cinema is on our lives. Knowing that what we were doing was to be exhibited in Venice – in a palazzo on the Grand Canal for Gods sake – set in train all the references about that mysterious watery and just-about-there city. The rapture and despair of Nicholas Roeg's *Don't Look Now* particularly with its beautifully shot narrative; the unrequited longing of the doom-laden *Death in Venice* with its suffused light and Mahler sound track conversely inspired me to search for a similar filmic quality but with a sense of hope and optimism triumphing over the darkness of defeat.

As Architects our work method is important. How we think, conjecture, discuss, and review. We create appropriate responses to briefs and places through an understanding of the requirements of users and response to context. We use reference and learn from what has gone before. Trying to tell the story of the life of a space through another medium requires the same rigour. We – Ciaran O'Brien, Mary Byrne and myself of GCA – knew we had to end up with a film (about 4 to 5 minutes in duration) which would be displayed in an 'armature' – to be designed by us - located in an historical Venetian building, together with the other Irish exhibitors. We knew we wanted to tell a story that went beyond the physicality of the buildings and the site, to somehow 'make perceptible the imperceptible', the back story of the convent and Garden at Cork Street.

To do this we talked a lot and formulated storyboards that could assemble a narrative linking history to today and to the future. We researched archives, libraries and map collections to assemble material from which we could draw. With our film maker collaborator, Alan O'Connor, we went back to Sophia and spent time (in a way we rarely have a chance to do) looking, photographing and filming the hidden garden, remnants of the nearly abandoned convent and chapel, the new homes and communal spaces, the part-derelict and intrusive streets and carriageways beyond.

The emotive and intuitive response was to try and represent what could be sensed but not seen. Perspectives from different times and generations had varied resonance. Having grown up in the 1950s and '60s my personal memories of the importance of religious congregations to the lives of the people in Irish society were very different from those of my younger colleagues. However we shared the wish to communicate the uniqueness and importance of a space such as the reclaimed convent garden at Cork Street in our modern city. To treasure a garden with a mature copper beech tree that had never been built on. A space that had acted as a focus for the changing lives around it. A space that had given light and air and view to many from the 18th century to now. Too often such spaces are lost, the collective memory of the surroundings eliminated through insensitive reuse. At Cork Street the aspiration of the client and ourselves was to nurture what we were given, but through controlled change (conservation in its true sense) make the space alive again for its young and old, religious and secular inhabitants. Representing this imaginative journey through moving images was our challenge.

The creative process we went through taught us to trust film. We had intended to include interviews and perhaps a voiceover, maybe captions to historical reference and mapping. But as the weeks went by and we assembled still old and new photographs, maps and footage we thought about the restrictions and opportunities for showing the completed piece both at the Biennale and later perhaps at home and elsewhere. We concluded that the film without written or verbal explanation had to say it all. To engage the viewer in the story of this space in Dublin, to reveal what is not visible, whilst respecting, without intrusion, the privacy of those whose home this is.

To show the film we needed to incorporate the screen, or screens, into an 'armature' the curators asked us to design. This went through many iterations and the temptation was to turn the setting into an installation in itself – to make it a piece of sculpture the viewer could engage with in a physical sense to sit in, lean

on, look into. What we came to was something more simple – the idea of a jewel box on its own base, a wrapped dark almost pristine container for the screen(s) supported on a white plinth. We looked at salvaging a lectern from the old chapel to act as the base but the consensus was that this object should be something totally new, detailed in a minimum way to not distract.

Thinking about how to display the story informed its telling. The jewel box has four sides, each one containing an lcd screen, all wrapped in a seamless polycarbonate skin. The armature – 1850mm high in total - can be viewed straight on or diagonally. Two opposite screens show the four and a half minute narrative on a continuous loop. The other two screens show, in real time, the tree in the garden, the wind moving the leaves and branches, the light on the grass subtly changing. The film brings the viewer in from the city, to the historical sanctuary of the space and back out again. The 'egg timer' sense of the film loop means that at one point in the film the images on all four screens are the same – that of the garden and the tree – our treasured place of contemplation and reflection.

Music provides the soundtrack to our lives. It engenders all the emotions and triggers memory. Finding something appropriate was almost telepathic between Alan and ourselves. A favourite film is Andrei Tarkovsy's *Solyaris*. An unforgettable science fiction work from 1972 regarding how a sentient planet physically recreates memory for those orbiting it. Somehow fitting in the context of the continuous life of the Cork St garden. The recent Hollywood remake of *Solaris* contains a score, which proved appropriate for adaptation as it swells and flows with the story. Apart from the laughter of children this is the sound that accompanies the visual journey.

When the film was viewed in draft form it was both moving and surprising. The honesty and clarity of the collaboration had resulted in an edit which, with small adjustment and revision, we found captured the essence of the hidden story we were trying to tell. The more I look at it, the more I like to believe that at certain times it contains a hidden unintended subconscious homage to Roeg in the reoccurrence of red in the leggings on the running child, the red panel in the window, the red dress on the girl on the pavement. But that is probably a fanciful notion and shows the potential of film for many interpretations – the enduring power of the moving image to influence our imagination.

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Zoom In Zoom Out Zoom In

UCD ARCHITECTURE



Each spring students in their second year of the degree programme in UCD Architecture undertake research through a study trip to a European city. The programme for this research has developed over recent years to view the city as a means for expanding the architectural vocabulary of the student in order that (in addition to augmenting the long term memory database) the experience of the study trip may directly act as precedent for the individual work of the students on their return to the studio.

With this aim in mind, last year, the students' research began before departure with the construction of A6 models of the buildings that featured on the itinerary for the trip. The models, being small, could be easily brought to the full size building to facilitate a student presentation to the class on the story and significance of the building. The student was then asked to photograph their model in situ, enabling a play of scale, time and record.

Beyond the individual building students were asked to consider the city as a physical library for their studio project. While in Venice each student was given a single word and asked to seek out a public space or sequence of spaces which both reflected this word and had resonance with some part of their own building project (a public baths in this case). Students were required to record their found spaces as you would a library reference and to use this reference as a tool in the design process.

The study trip was thus used a research tool in two ways: firstly, through advance research, the representation of the building/city was brought to the real artifact and interrogated from an informed perspective; secondly, the city was examined as a specific physical resource for the design process and applied directly to address the thought/design process of the individual student.

The Importance of Seating in Local Public Space

JOHN PERREM

The essence of a city is often associated with the flow and transience of people through its streets, parks and other public spaces. Indeed, the localised individual sense of place a city creates often directly correlates to this hustle and bustle. Whilst movement is crucial in generating a vibrant urban atmosphere, seating is a vital part of the overall quality of local public spaces. Areas where people sit act as nodes of stillness in a sea of movement and flux. These nodes have their own microcosmic interactions, patterns of use and spatial arrangements.

Public space offers a realm in which meaning and community can prevail through establishing social contact, and seating has a major role in this process of connection and re-connection between others and oneself. Seating allows people to linger and enjoy the presence of others directly or indirectly, along with the sights, sounds and smells of a space. The sense we get while travelling through a space is very different to the experience of remaining still within it. When our bodies are in motion we are often scouring our mental maps of an area, moving, negotiating with space, and thinking about our route from point A to point B. We watch the ground ahead for obstructions; we move to avoid potential collisions with bicycles, buggies, cars or people.

Sitting is a very different proposition.

When sitting within a space a new range of possibilities become available to us. The opportunity to really look and experience what is happening around us becomes much easier. This can lead to a better understanding of our local spaces. The shape of a particular building, the way sunlight is trapped in certain places, where boundaries connecting different territories begin and end, the way people look, dress and interact with each other, are all readily explorable.

The pace at which the contemporary city moves has increased, partly due to pressure for greater productivity in the workplace and partly due to a greater access for a greater number of people to a greater number of consumer goods and services. The increased pace of urban movement has been accompanied by a corresponding decrease in the value placed on the city as place for all citizens to simply be (as opposed to buy, consume or do). As a result, availability of free public seating has decreased and the provision of pay-to-sit locations has multiplied. The net result is the exclusion from the city of those who cannot afford to pay to sit – usually the poor, the homeless, and the elderly.

The sense of isolation sometimes linked to urban lifestyles is less easily overcome when public space is absent, and even more so when people cannot freely sit within those spaces to take time out. If one can sit and absorb the social life of public spaces, it can help to re-establish a sense of connection between individuals in small but important ways. The chance of striking up a conversation with a stranger who happens to sit next to you on a bench, or watching a performer or busker at work, or appreciating a piece of public art, or simply reading a book in a wider social environment are illustrations of this.



A variety of traditional and more innovative seating forms are evident in Cork city's public spaces such as Bishop Lucey Park and Emmett Place and these are captured within the images throughout this piece. A skateboard, traffic bollard or bicycle stand are good examples of innovative ways people will find to sit within a space.

In places where positive approaches to seating are taken, people are more likely to stay for longer periods. The benefit of people spending more time in public spaces is that spaces then become more self-regulating entities, and also focal points for the expression of a city's particular identity and culture. Consistently empty public spaces can often seem quite lonely, uninviting and intimidating, while vibrant and lively spaces will be more attractive to people and draw them in through a socially self-reinforcing process.

When we imagine seating in public space the primary image that comes to mind may be a traditional park bench. However, in addition to traditional seating, alternative, more informal versions can be incorporated into the design of public space. Informal seating, which can allow people to group, cluster or to sit alone, provides variety for the user. Low walls, raised plinths, grass beds and trees all offer alternative places to stop by, lean against, shelter under. A greater variety of seating types and surfaces facilitates maximum choice for both groups and individuals, and adds a sense of dynamism and variety within the space.

Next time you are passing through a public space and have an opportunity to sit down for a while, why not stop and consider the depth of possibilities and potential of being still and seated.

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Territory of Reference

ASTRID PIBER

Local and Global are part of everyday life. They are not dichotomies in space and time. Every human being defines themselves through cultural reference to their own local and global experiences. New strategies develop to negotiate between the two extremes and each individual can refer to their own territory of cultural reference. Equally, one can try to understand the effects of increasing globalisation on architectural practice by studying the new strategies that are emerging and whether new network structures can influence the area of activity of practitioners.

The opportunity to meet and discuss with other young architects through networks like the Wonderland Platform gives insight into the potential effects of globalisation on daily practice. Through workshops, symposia and lecture series (initiated in 2002) the young architects affiliated with this platform presented their work and approaches within various contexts throughout European locations.¹ The participants initially were fascinated by cultural differences within Europe, but through exchanging practical experiences the architectural diversity also became evident. While consciously disregarding any stylistic or formal common denominators, the architects within this network started sharing knowledge on the *how* of the profession.

In the following I would like to trace a line of thought between several layers of examination: firstly, that local and global influences have always been strongly linked to the development of architectural knowledge; secondly, that an increase in mobility has re-defined the territory of operation which in turn has shifted the focus of the profession to strategies rather than products; and thirdly, that the research undertaken for the production of the first three issues of the magazine Wonderlandⁱⁱ has highlighted reoccurring strategies that contemporary practitioners utilise to negotiate between different territories of reference.

Diversity and critical mass

European architectural history reflects a strong presence of both local and global impetus. Architects and art historians have predominantly studied projects and persons, and presented their findings, references and information to the following generation(s) of architects. While disregarding the products of architecture for now, the effects on critical practice influence cultural production and therefore cultural identity. Focusing on how practice developed within Europe it seems evident that influences of tradition, method, economy and politics have determined a framework, within which architects and designers have developed their professional *modus operandi*.

Our cultural background influences how we think and therefore how we make things. This is also true when practicing architecture, which essentially goes beyond designing buildings. Practicing architecture means constantly balancing professional, economical and technical ambitions, while establishing a cultural identity that is reflected in the work.

Compared to previous decades, an increased mobility along with other external conditions is transforming society and the way in which global and local identities are formed. While these aspects are of concern to the individual they also impact on practices and generate a much larger referential field where additional decisions and choices have to be considered.

Looking at the numbers of registered architects worldwide over time, the highest density of architects has historically been counted within Europeⁱⁱⁱ, which became a special melting pot with a critical amount of professional activity present. In his book, *The Favoured Circle*, Garry Stevens compares the total world population in relation to the number of architects registered. The pattern that he discovered describes that in the great periods, like the Renaissance transition and the Baroque transition the density of architects was higher than in the areas between. The big achievements in architecture all stem from the transition periods where there were a higher number of architects compared to the overall population.^{iv} Stevens reflects in his study data two main networks of architects, the Renaissance network and the Modern network, where he looks at the growth and decline of the members in these networks in proportion to total number of architects.^v Looking then at critical densities of architects worldwide nowadays, while most architects are still registered in Europe, more and more architects are being licensed globally. As the field of architecture is affected by globalisation in the way that building production is linked to growth of agglomerations, in the last decades new markets have opened up and architects can work abroad more easily. These diverse locations are then the cultural and economic environment, the territory of reference, within which the critical mass of architectural production is taking place, and where local practical knowledge of the field has to fuse with imported knowledge.

Mobility and professional networks

In contrast to the architects from previous generations, the average architecture student today not only travels for study purposes but also settles temporarily to gain living and working experience abroad. Scholarships and grants increase the opportunities for a large number of students and young practitioners to search for their individual territory of reference. Gaining an understanding of different architectural and cultural contexts is as valuable as passing examinations. Consequently this shift in emphasis serves as a basis for making further choices in life and work.

This generation of young architects can be characterised by a different mind-set than architects of previous generations. Loosely described as the 'Easy Jet generation'^{vi}, these architects studied and/or worked abroad and traveled extensively as part of their education. They have grown up in the new Europe, the Europe without boundaries or where the previous boundaries have become meaningless and no longer establish a threshold. These architects have learned different languages, are familiar with the cultural differences that exist and moreover, do not hesitate to exchange knowledge on these subjects. Through the process of experiencing diverse environments their understanding and professional thinking is constantly updated and informed – knowledge is built up.

The increasing globalisation of education and job markets pose a further challenge to practitioners, who have to consciously define their position in this framework and develop strategies in order to balance the processes that are intrinsically linked. One strategy is setting up living and professional networks. The Wonderland network emerged more than six years ago out of an opportunity to organise a group exhibition. A loose network of personal relationships developed into an association that would communicate all raised questions and potential answers to specific themes and problems relating to the profession. The common denominator found amongst the various practices was an interest in defining one's cultural identity and in succeeding as an architect in business terms.

Global and local within practices

Information from various practices was collected through interviews and surveys of architects linked to the wonderland platform.^{vii} Between 2006 and 2008 three issues of Wonderland magazine were published.^{viii} The following seem to be the critical factors effecting contemporary practices.

i) Conscious self-positioning

The current generation of architects starting in practice can fully profit from a professional title recognised across the EU, and from the growing globalisation of both education and job markets. Therefore choosing the location for setting up practice has become a key-decision point. No location is the same as another and each location involves very specific starting conditions that might determine much of the difficulties and opportunities involved in running a practice. Within the EU the requirements for becoming a licensed architect vary greatly among the different countries. Compulsory internships, professional exams, and factors such as title protection and compulsory pension schemes, determine the specific 'local' hurdles for accessing the title.^{ix}

ii) Starting-up projects

As most first commissions and studies are acquired through social networks, one would naturally start up business where such contacts already exist or develop such a network on the targeted location. There are numerous advantages in setting up business in the country or in the big city.^x The choice is strongly connected to future commissions and the type of work an architect would want to do for most of the time during their career. Most first commissions from the surveyed practices fall into the category of living spaces: renovations, extensions and single-family houses are traditional building projects; what was surprising to find among the interviewed firms was that the majority are working simultaneously on local, national and international projects.^{xi}

iii) Collaborating across boundaries

Setting-up practice simultaneously in several places has become more common, as more and more firms have partners stemming from different geographical backgrounds.^{xii} With such a mix of territorial references, many of the practices can overcome the difficulties involved in practicing within several geographical, cultural and economic contexts. This strategy becomes more advantageous when changing location and setting up a practice in a different country, because additional national requirements apply, and for various services different licenses may be required.^{xiii}

iv) Expanding the scope of practice

As definitions of professional scope are mostly based on a traditional understanding of the work of an architect in a specific location, the services provided by architects within different European countries still vary.^{xiv} Practitioners that provide services abroad often collaborate with a local partner or acquire for themselves the knowledge needed within their professional scope. Attempts are being made to regulate the profession on a European level, and in parallel, knowledge of how to deal with some of the grey areas of the profession is being researched and the boundaries of practice are expanding.

v) Producing cultural value

Expansion of the field requires additional skills and flexibility from architects. On one hand this boosts knowledge growth in general, but makes it also more difficult on the other hand to define one's cultural identity. While producing architecture, designing one's own firm becomes equally important. Whether certain specialisation and distinct approaches are part of a firm's identity depend on the individual preferences, but these choices get reflected by various marketing strategies. While most interviewed firms acknowledge the potential of going public as a way of getting recognised, only a few choose to send out press packages, but most believe in combining their public presence with participation in group exhibitions and professional networks.^{xv}

Conclusion

Architects contribute to cultural production not merely through their products – namely buildings and the representation of ideas, but they increasingly produce cultural value through the way they operate strategically, how they define themselves and how they create for a large part their individual working environment. Experienced with both local and global references, practitioners today therefore apply design thinking that reacts to both conditions, which in turn triggers new ways and manners of architectural production.

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ⁱ See <http://www.wonderland.cx/>

ⁱⁱ All three issues published between 2006 and 2008 are available in pdf-format from: http://www.wonderland.cx/1_magazine.html; http://www.wonderland.cx/2_magazine.html; http://www.wonderland.cx/3_magazine.html

ⁱⁱⁱ The Member statistic of the UIA [L'Union Internationale de Architectes] from 2005 showed for Europe 330.882 persons, which is approximately half of the worldwide registered architects; from: http://www.bakcms.de/bak/daten-fakten/architekten_in_europa_und_weltweit/Architekten_weltweit.pdf

^{iv} Garry Stevens: The Favored Circle, The Social Foundations of Architectural Distinction", MIT Press, 1998, page 140-141

^v Garry Stevens: The Favored Circle, The Social Foundations of Architectural Distinction", MIT Press, 1998, page 165-166

^{vi} Term was coined by Hans Ibelings in his article "De easy-jet generatie, Drei generaties architecten [1]", in BladNA 12 [2005] 9 (September 13th);

^{vii} The surveys for the three magazines were conducted by Silvia Forlati from Share architects, Vienna; see wonderland #1 page 36; see wonderland #2 page 15; see wonderland #3 page 13;

^{viii} The published magazines are available for download at: http://www.wonderland.cx/3_magazine.html

^{ix} Astrid Piber: Rules of Admission, in: Wonderland #1 'getting started', page 8-11;

^x Anne Isopp: Setting up office, in: Wonderland #1 'getting started', page 12-13;

^{xi} Survey by Share Architects: Local or Global?, in Wonderland #1 'getting started', page 16;

^{xii} The Survey by Share Architects for Wonderland #1 getting started concluded that 28.8% of the participating practices were based in more than one country. in Wonderland #1 'getting started', page 16;

^{xiii} Silvia Forlati: Crossing Borders, temporary professional licenses within the European Union, in Wonderland #2 'making mistakes', page 12-13;

^{xiv} The random comparison of the scope of work as defined in Finland, Ireland, Italy and Slovenia shows that the traditional understanding of the role of an architect can differ as soon it comes to 'other' services that can or can not be provided. see Astrid Piber: Scope of practice, in Wonderland #2 'making mistakes', page 8-11;

^{xv} Survey by Share Architects: Going Public, in Wonderland #3 'going public', page 13, 35;

Thar Lár

KEVIN DONOVAN

Last March, Milan was in extended twilight. It was, and had been, raining, neither delicately nor dramatically but conclusively. Large parts of the city had been opened up in preparation for new roads and buildings. Cars and coaches moved slowly and continuously along wide, imperial streets and up onto the few finished motorway decks touching down about the city. The entire zone was flat and humming slightly, electric; a sodden, artificial landscape of vast scale, a great, grey continuous horizon. My experience of the city as a tourist was always at a remove and always rolling, fluidly, on the edges of open, blasted ground. Cellars and facades were disclosed, some half finished and ruinous, others first revealed after long concealment. Through rain-streaked windows and the mesmeric flicking of windscreen wipers, from inside the car's comforting fug and hum, the city became a tableau, long and distant, a cold and lovely *veduta* of motorway infrastructure, half built or half demolished, both waiting for the cars to come and feeling that they are already gone.

No stranger to rain, I found myself loving it, and what I saw through it, in a way I often don't. We travel, typically, to find what we expect will be utterly different from our own experience, something spectacular and blowsy. The utterly different is, however, often unsurprising, commonly known to us through images received via the media and advertising. The tropical is in some ways not so distant within our imagination. At a further remove is the unknown known, as in the idea of rain abroad, rain which we have appropriated as our own and which surprises us when it appears in the context of the foreign. In Italy, it only ever rains at the end of Fellini movies and then purely for effect.

Shocking yet familiar, the rain became my way into the city, falling on the excavations and traffic diversions as it so often falls on me in my own city. And it was in this rain, in Milan, that I saw the building I had come to see, the extension to the Bocconi University by Grafton architects.

Being in a building made by Irish architects abroad is still an experience uncommon enough to be remarkable. More remarkable, however, in this case was, for me the sense of being in a collection of spaces, internal and external, which might always have been there, latterly filled in out of expediency, and recently brought to light again, as might be expected in Italy. Rather than made, the project seems discovered and along with it a set of relations, physical and cultural, which seem as old as the site in which it stands.

Not a discrete building, the project is a piece of city, a city which slowly discloses. These 45,000 square metres of office, conference facilities, lecture halls, gathering spaces and university entrance deploy the elements of wall, passage, gate, court and building all at once and in a complex unified language as in a precinct. Elements are arranged strategically on the site to enforce their relationship with the city. Thus the large volume of a theatre for 1000 people is located as a hard edge to a hard street. A large open gathering space is made on the street connected in section and plan to the activity within the building on one side and the city on the other. Entrance is delayed to the centre of the plan and is reached through slip-spaces between and under built volumes made of the city's grey stone so thinly jointed as to appear of monolithic construction.

The scale of the project is attuned to the scale of the city ancient, modern and to come. The ground of the site is worked to a depth of five and nine meters variously, to hold deep trays of underground space, layered



upon each other. Lined in white marble and lit dimly from above through the section, these are vast but low, serious and full of the potential of emptiness. Everywhere is the sense that you are walking in abstract spaces made for an older purpose now forgotten. Maybe they once held water; it is conceivable. These spaces are reached from the ground externally and internally by monumental steps, deep and old-seeming, very deliberately marking the descent.

The building above is hung from deep beams at regular intervals. The expression of the technology is, however, sacrificed to abstraction. The beams are made and placed so as to be understood as walls and operate as part of the fabric and space-making vocabulary of the building. Thus the massiveness of the structure is transferred to the mass of the building as a whole, and allows the reading of the upper stories as a single deep inhabited roof which is partly cut back to protect, modulate and inform the drift space left over between itself and the cutaway ground.

This series of interstitial spaces is made for the loose practice of exchange on which the life of the university turns. The structural imperative of the project has informed the composition of these spaces made within and around it. Members spanning between the main structural elements are allowed to open up and a dynamic section becomes apparent. The views are vertical, horizontal and diagonal. Always there is the awareness of other spaces and conversations, internal and external inflecting one's experience. This erosion of spatial boundaries through sectional dissolution recalls the mildly illicit adventure associated with visiting ruins; the discovery of space unexpectedly disclosed moves the mind to expand and dream.

One of the legacies of the twentieth century in architecture is the acceptance that there are aspects of *firmitas*, *venustas* and *utilitas* that may be applied on a global scale. We particularly take as given the new architecture of the corporate institution, which is paradoxically recognisable and anonymous, one giant of international economy being housed in much the same way as another. The elements of construction employed are banalised to the point where they may be used anywhere without fear of transmitting meaning.

In a city with no shortage of new projects by foreign architects, this project derives from a different understanding of what it might mean to build in another place. The international aspect of this project is its ability to bring from one place and one time to another a sensibility to uncover the potential of that second place and time for their own sakes. Rather than precluding invention, the effect of this strategy is to explore the sameness in difference, taking the things we know and using them to prise open up new possibilities in another culture, ones which an outsider's eye can most easily see.

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Case No. 226834

LOGAN SISLEY

An Bord Pleanála's recent approval of Foster + Partners' designs for the redevelopment of Dublin's Clarence Hotel raises interesting questions about the value of the archival record as distinct from the physical artefact. A condition attached to the permission stipulates that

prior to the demolition of the protected structures, all existing buildings and interiors shall be preserved by record and the drawings and photographic records shall be lodged with the Architectural Archive.ⁱ

The rationale is that the developer 'should facilitate and assist in securing the *preservation* by record of architectural features which exist within the site.' The creation of a document is given priority over the preservation of physical architectural features. The implications of this condition enable reflection on the relationship of archives to built heritage in contemporary culture.

This insistence on documentation and archiving in the context of the officially-sanctioned demolition of listed buildings is not unique to Dublin. When permission was given to demolish four listed buildings of regional importance to extend the M74 motorway through Glasgow, various *mitigation* measures were implemented, including building surveys and photographic surveys.ⁱⁱ The project's backers claimed that the surveys would 'provide new information which will help increase the understanding of the past history of the area.'ⁱⁱⁱ The demolition of listed buildings is here (ironically) viewed as a positive means to gain a greater understanding of built heritage.

Foster + Partners design for the Clarence retains only the façades of the existing buildings fronting onto Wellington Quay. Façade retention (albeit with reinstatement of the volumes of the rooms behind the retained elevations) can be seen as another 'mitigation measure', allowing a development to proceed with a token gesture to heritage. Foster + Partners describe the scheme as 'combining the restoration of the existing quayside façade as well as the sensitive insertion of new additions'^{iv}; An Bord Pleanála considered that 'the measures proposed for the conservation and re-use of the historic fabric of the protected structures' would maintain 'the integrity of the Liffey Quays Conservation Area.'^v Conservation of a fragment is emphasised even though its architectural context is to be replaced. Retaining the façades facing the





Liffey and not those on East Essex Street to the rear of the buildings privileges one view – from the quays and betrays a two-dimensional understanding of the city. The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government advised that ‘chimneys, as with roofscapes, are important elements in defining a building in three dimensions and that without them façades appear as mere wallpaper.’^{vi} To value only the façade of these buildings promotes an understanding of architecture in two-dimensions, emphasising the decorative over the spatial. While there is great value in archival holdings in elucidating built heritage that is lost and enhancing appreciation of that which remains, there are limits to the document. A drawing or photograph, for all their merits cannot replace physical experience of space.

The idea that such measures become a widely accepted means to facilitate development of historic sites conjures up the possibility of a world where an entire city might be erased and rebuilt - first drawn and photographed and stored in an architectural archive; a map of a city that might even allow for its future reconstruction. A critic of the information management pioneer, Paul Otlet, once said that he ‘ingeniously reduced the whole of science to files and index cards.’^{vii} Might the approach recommended by An Bord Pleanála reduce a temporal layer of a city to a series of drawings and photographs? Many of Otlet’s ambitions remained unrealised, including most famously the Mundaneum designed by Le Corbusier. This a building that only exists on paper and in the mind. Parallel un-built cities exist in archives and imaginations the world over. If An Bord Pleanála’s ruling was otherwise, Foster’s vision of the Clarence would also belong to this realm. The plans may themselves have ended up in an architectural archive to be the subject of ‘what if?’ speculation.

Archives may traditionally be seen as a secondary activity, recording and collecting the traces of other endeavours. To archive a document shifts it from current use to a state of limbo, awaiting reactivation at some undetermined point in the future. To archive a building has similar implications; it is deemed no longer current, living, which in turn authorises its destruction. An Bord Pleanála’s directive to archive (a word that has only recently gained usage as a verb)^{viii} a building before it’s destruction is consistent with a recent shift to an active archival practice. While archives are closely linked in popular imagination to history and the past, in their origins their creators aspire to the future; their contents await reactivation by future readers. Time, in terms of the development’s historical context and its potential legacy, is a recurring theme in the judgment by An Bord Pleanála. While the proposal retains only the quayside façades of six protected buildings, An Bord Pleanála ruled that the design would add to the ‘architectural legacy of the city of Dublin.’^{ix} Objecting to the ruling, Emmeline Henderson argued that the ‘built heritage of tomorrow’ should not be erected at the expense of Dublin’s historic buildings and streetscapes.’ The debate over the development is in part an argument over whose history and whose legacy stands over time. An Bord Pleanála argues that the proposed building “would *in time* become a significant feature in vistas along the Liffey and would ensure the continued historic hotel use of a signature building.”^x “Continuity of use was an argument put forward by the hotel’s owners, The Clarence Partnership, and was welcomed by An Bord Pleanála: ‘continuance of hotel use on the site would conserve an intrinsic aspect of the special social interest of the premises.’^{xii} The hotel’s owners warned that failure to gain approval could lead to the property being sold,



possibly for a ‘down-market budget hotel’.^{xiii} The appeal to history is selective however and the up-market hotel is favoured over other historic uses of the site, such as Dollard’s printing-house, adjacent to the hotel, or the working men’s club that inhabited no. 9 Wellington Quay.

The arguments over the Clarence also reflect anxieties over the relationship of local and national histories to global economics. There is a tension between the creation of a world-class hotel versus the preservation of buildings of regional significance.^{xiv} The desire to retain façades and to record buildings in the process of their destruction could be seen as an attempt to identify with a place, Dublin, in the global context of increasing urban homogenisation, in part engendered by the engagement of international architects. The desire to document before destruction also echoes the tourist drive to see before things disappear and reflects an anxiety about the future of the past.^{xv} Photography is a key tool in the documentation of the tourist experience and is also a strategy for the documentation of buildings at risk. The photograph has long been associated with loss and the passing moment.^{xvi} The Clarence, the former Dollard’s printing house and the Georgian houses on Wellington Quay will soon exist as only as architectural fragments, their forms traceable only through documents and memories.

We live in an increasingly documented society in which the preference for the document over the real in part relates to the proliferation of virtual surrogates that digital media now offers. Do documentation strategies allow for a throwaway attitude to the built environment? Surveying what is to be lost may ease the discomfort brought by the march of progress. Scholarly documentation may be seen to mitigate damage to our built heritage and in doing so shifts any notion of architectural permanence from the street to the archive. Buildings of brick and stone may ultimately be just as ephemeral as the paper plans from which they were built.

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i *An Bord Pleanála Reference Number: PL 29S.226834*, An Bord Pleanála, Dublin, p. 5

ii *M74 Completion Environmental Statement: Non-Technical Summary*, Glasgow City Council, Glasgow, 2003, p. VII

iii *M74 Completion Environmental Statement: Non-Technical Summary*, Glasgow City Council, Glasgow, 2003, pp. VII-VIII

iv <http://www.fosterandpartners.com/Projects/1392/Default.aspx>

v *An Bord Pleanála Reference Number: PL 29S.226834*, An Bord Pleanála, Dublin, p. 4

vi Kevin Moore, *An Bord Pleanála Inspector’s Report, PL 29S.226834*, An Bord Pleanála, Dublin, p. 26

vii Quoted in Stefan Fisch, “Files and Books. Paul Otlet and the Beginnings of the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS-IISA) at Brussels”, Analogous Spaces conference proceedings, Ghent University, Ghent, 2008

viii See *The Evidence in Hand: Report of the Task Force on the Artifact in Library Collections*, Council on Library and Information Resources, Washington, D.C., 2001

ix *An Bord Pleanála Reference Number: PL 29S.226834*, An Bord Pleanála, Dublin, p. 3

x Emmeline Henderson, Letter to the Editor, *The Irish Times*, 31 July 2008

xi *An Bord Pleanála Reference Number: PL 29S.226834*, An Bord Pleanála, Dublin, p. 3

xii *An Bord Pleanála Reference Number: PL 29S.226834*, An Bord Pleanála, Dublin, p. 4

xiii Quoted in Frank McDonald, “Clarence group gets permission to redevelop,” *The Irish Times*, 18 July 2008

xiv The applicant’s, responding to the appeals to the original decision in favour of the development by Dublin City Council, proposed that the “argument about the buildings being of local or regional importance becomes less relevant when it is considered that the key elements that contribute to the cultural significance of the site are preserved and enhanced.” - Kevin Moore, *An Bord Pleanála Inspector’s Report, PL 29S.226834*, An Bord Pleanála, Dublin, p. 14

xv See Allen Salkin, “Before It Disappears”, *New York Times*, December 16, 2007. It is also a factor in the origins of many architectural archives.

xvi For example, Jay Prosser, *Light in the Dark Room: Photography and Loss*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2004

Somewhere in...

STEPHEN MCGARRIGLE



Stephen McGarrigle is a native of Dublin who lives in San Francisco. Stephen set up the dub community website dub.com and has an extensive well-listened-to collection of analogue and digital recordings.

Innovating to Compete: Dublin as a Smart and Creative City

VERONICA CROSSA AND NIAMH MOORE

Increasingly, European and North American cities are facing stiff competition for investment as a result of evermore mobile capital and labour and the growth of low cost, emerging industrial cities, particularly in India and China. Urban policy makers argue that if a city wants to remain attractive in a context of heightened global competition, it has to be *creative*. Creativity currently occupies centre-stage in contemporary urban politics, where influential individuals like Richard Florida have become key protagonists in the global urban competitiveness game. According to Florida (2002; 2005) a creative city is one which is capable of attracting a highly skilled and mobile international workforce that is prepared and able to move anywhere provided the location is comfortable, facilitates a bohemian lifestyle, and is set within a framework of tolerance and cultural openness. This attractive pool of people includes designers, architects, musicians, writers, film-makers and other artists. Hence, a city becomes labelled as a creative city if it is able to attract a cohort of people whose presence is perceived to heighten a city's attractiveness. While this may or may not be true for most cities, this is the dominant paradigm that is shaping urban competitiveness agendas at present. The 'creative city/creative class' idea has become an attractive and accepted global discourse that has been embraced by urban localities and managers across the world and materialised in economic development policies geared at stimulating the growth of the 'creative class'. It is a discourse which is (re)produced by world leading experts on the creative economy and creative cities, like Florida, who travel the world advising city councils and urban elites how to remain competitive in a global context characterised by deindustrialisation, greater capital mobility and flexibility (Harvey, 1989a), shifts in the international geography of production, and a growing flexible service economy (Sassen, 2000).

In this short piece we examine the increasingly influential urban discourses such as those produced by Richard Florida on the 'creative city'. We show how these discourses are playing into a broader set of concerns regarding urban competitiveness in a changing global economy. We ground these global discourses by exploring the case of Dublin; particularly with regards to the efforts made by the city council and urban entrepreneurs to embrace the creative city discourse and embed it within specific economic development policies. Much of the material presented in this paper is based on our involvement in an EU project, ACRE, which explores the impact of knowledge-intensive and creative industries on the competitiveness of several EU city-regions.

Local competitiveness in a global economy

In the geographical and urban studies literature, scholars have argued that cities have undergone significant changes in relation to the way they are being managed, organised and governed (Cox, 1995), particularly in the last two decades. This shift is a product of mid-1970s global economic restructuring when significant transformations in the structure and organisation of the global economy became apparent. Such transformations include greater capital mobility and flexibility, shifts in the international geography of production, and growth in the flexible service economy. With the decreasing fiscal power of the national state, the changing order of economic competition and the new hypermobility of capital, cities are now organised and governed differently. Urban politics has shifted from a managerial form of government to an entrepreneurial form of urban governance (Harvey, 1989a; Hubbard and Hall, 1998; Jessop, 2000). Whereas managerial forms of government focus on the provision of welfare and services

to the local population, entrepreneurial forms of governance entail, among other things, collaboration between city governments and urban elites to create the necessary conditions for attracting mobile capital (Harvey, 1985). Central to the creation of successful entrepreneurial discourses, has been the attention devoted to transforming the image of the city from a centre of production and work to an attractive place for both local and global investment (Amin, 1994; Christopherson, 1994). The re-imagining of the city can be achieved through the implementation of a diverse set of strategies, from the creation of consumer centres – such as malls, sport stadiums, convention centres and cultural spaces – to the reconstruction of urban neighbourhoods and public spaces through gentrification or the creation of cultural quarters, such as Temple Bar, Dublin (Boyle, 1999; Crilley, 1993; Knox, 1997) or the designation of a city as a European City of Culture or European City of Architecture for example. The simultaneous development of international financial centres, national convention centres and festival retailing combined with high-quality, exclusive residential enclaves have almost become the 'standard' formula for successful and attractive global waterfront regeneration. The case of the Dublin Docklands development project is a classic example of a global box-standard redesign of the urban physical landscape as a marketing strategy for urban economic development (Hubbard, 1995). What stands out is the need for cities to appear as innovative, exciting, creative and safe places to live, visit, invest, play and consume in (Harvey, 1989b). Underlying these strategies, therefore, is the notion of cities as products, to be sold, promoted and marketed as with any other commodity (Ashworth and Voogd, 1990); all of this at the expense of concerns over the provision of care (education, basic services, health, etc) to the local population.

In the context of an increased aestheticisation of city landscapes, concern has been raised about the effects of these changes in urban space and the new forms of socio-spatial exclusion produced by entrepreneurial strategies. Some scholars argue that urban spaces are becoming arenas of mass consumption rather than spaces of democratic interaction (Davis, 1990; 1992). As such, individuals are seen as consumers, rather than as citizens. Similarly, urban public spaces have become a business space where mechanisms such as physical security systems have been used as a means of excluding undesirable individuals or practices that jeopardise, in some way, these new 'business' spaces. The degree of openness in spaces for 'public' activities is slowly being eroded and supplanted by highly privatised spaces. That is, spaces that implicitly celebrate homogeneity rather than diversity, spaces of exclusion rather than of inclusion, spaces of one rather than of many. In this sense, difference, diversity and hybridity are conceived as '*overwhelming and dangerous, to be excluded or segregated where possible – indeed, something to be afraid of*' (Bannister and Fyfe, 2001: 807). Under this logic, public space becomes an arena shaped as an '*urban theater [...] in which a pacified public basks in the grandeur of a carefully orchestrated corporate spectacle*' (Crilley, 1993: 153).

The determinants of urban competitiveness are much more complex and dynamic and include things such as availability of highly skilled workers and an attractive fiscal context. While they remain important for international competitiveness, these traditional 'hard' location factors have come under increasing scrutiny in recent years. In recent work, Florida (2002, 2005) has suggested that, new 'soft' locations factors including issues such as tolerance, openness, diversity, and quality of life are becoming increasingly important. These soft factors are not regarded as the drivers of economic success; rather they

are a means of ensuring the attractiveness of particular locations to the young and talented individuals who work in knowledge-based and creative-intensive activities that will be critical to future urban success. The argument is that while nineteenth-century urban success depended on industrialisation and twentieth-century success depended largely on the development of technological capabilities, the sustainability of cities in the twenty-first century will rely very much on creativity and innovation. Cities have always been considered crucibles of creativity (Hall, 1999), but it is only in recent times that this innovation and creativity has been linked explicitly with economic development processes. A wide range of cities across the world have embraced this discourse of creativity. Although Dublin is no exception, the widespread recognition and adoption of this approach as part of the development agenda has been much slower than in many other European cities, such as Amsterdam or Barcelona.

Dublin as emergent creative city?

Dublin shall be a city driven by creativity, imagination and innovation, which attracts highly skilled labour and that encourages and promotes research, enterprise and an entrepreneurial culture (Imagine Dublin 2020, Dublin Chamber of Commerce)

Countries across the world are branding their cities as creative or are adopting slogans linked to creativity. Ireland is no different. For example, Galway's 2005-2008 Action Plan prioritised the need to develop the concept of 'Galway as a *creative city*'. The idea was to establish connections between the Galway Arts Centre, the Architect in Residence Scheme and the new Galway City Arts Plan/Strategy as a means of facilitating the formation of a creative urban centre. Similarly, in October 2007, the Dublin Regional Authority together with the Dublin Employment Pact organised a one-day conference entitled 'Dublin: creative city region'. The objective was to re-define Dublin's position within the new competitiveness framework of urban creativity. Richard Florida's presence in the conference was seen as essential for promoting and legitimizing the campaign of creativity for Dublin. According to Florida, a fundamental part of Ireland's attraction to investors is its young, English speaking, and well-educated population. Hence, Ireland is no longer considered a marginal player in the global economy; rather, it is among the leading group of players in the global competition for 'talent'. For Florida, Dublin has transformed itself into a lifestyle destination, with a large and growing group of foreign and home-grown technology companies, proficient technical colleges and universities, and a thriving artistic and cultural scene.

While Dublin is a young and vibrant city experiencing significant economic and social transformations, these have not occurred without major challenges. If we accept the arguments of Richard Florida that 'soft' locations factors such as tolerance, openness, diversity, and quality of life will be critical in attracting and retaining creative workers on which future economic and urban growth is dependent, Dublin has much work to do. For Richard Florida, tolerant places are those where gays, bohemians and immigrants feel at home and where there is significant racial integration. Ireland's, and by inference Dublin's performance, relative to Florida's 'tolerance index' is among the lowest in Europe (Florida and Tingali 2004). The Euro-tolerance Index is based on three measures. First, the values index '*measures the degree to which a country espouses traditional as opposed to modern or secular values*' (Florida, 2005). Second, the self-expression index captures the degree to which a nation values individual rights and self

expression. The final measurement is called the Attitudes Index and measures attitudes towards minority groups in the country. Ireland ranked the lowest European nation in the values index, with -8.63 points (compared to Sweden with 15 points). This low figure can be attributed partly to the sustained influence of Roman Catholic values on much of contemporary Irish society, although this has waned considerably over the last twenty years.

As Ireland has become one of the most affluent countries in Europe, the Irish consider themselves increasingly tolerant of their more diverse society (Cullen, 2005). This is partly because Ireland has experienced a number of important changes in relation to issues of tolerance in the last twenty years. During the 1980s and 1990s, many traditional values embedded within the Irish constitution were challenged by pressures both from within – through different activist groups – and external pressures coming predominantly from the European Union. In terms of gender relations, the introduction of new equality legislation and new infrastructural developments placed women in Ireland in a relatively better position with regard to employment rights, domestic rights, etc. Indeed, Ireland has been made significant progress in areas of civil rights that have been traditionally restricted in the name of Roman Catholic doctrine.

The Irish economic boom of the 1990s reverted historical patterns of emigration and led to unprecedented levels of immigration. Numerous work permits and visas were issued as a result of labour shortages during the Celtic Tiger (Loyal, 2003). Similar to other European countries experiencing immigration, Ireland also witnessed the movement of refugees and asylum seekers during the 1990s, albeit a relatively small number when compared to other European countries. The high rates of immigration have forced Irish nationals and government bodies to reassess notions of ethnicity, class, and race.

However, developing a culture of pluralism is now a growing concern as, for the first time in history, Dublin is now home to many immigrant communities and reports of racist assaults are on the rise. Despite Ireland's image as a welcoming and hospitable nation, many ethnic minority communities have experienced racism at several levels, from individual hatred acts in public space, to institutional forms of racism. While the diminution in power of traditional institutions, such as the Roman Catholic Church, has also resulted in greater openness to alternative lifestyles, tolerance of difference in the city remains far behind other cities such as Amsterdam and Barcelona. In recent months, the local authority has indicated a growing interest in the concept of developing Dublin as a creative city-region but, although lip-service is paid to cultural factors, classic locational attributes still play a key role in the developing discourses. Addressing the social and cultural dimensions, or 'soft factors', that have been identified as core to the creative city debate will need to underpin future growth policy if the creative city idea is to be fully embraced.

While a range of actors and institutions have successfully marketed the city to overseas investors and other interests, the future sustainability of the city will depend on the introduction of relevant, place-specific policies. The replication of policies that are fashionable or have worked in other places simply may not suit or be relevant to the local context. Creating a city that speaks equally to entrepreneurs,

residents and migrants is a difficult task and one that requires significant innovative thinking. The true test of whether Dublin is likely to succeed as a creative city will be if it can smartly harness local knowledge and global investment to develop truly innovative approaches to future growth, marking it out from the many other 'wannabe cities' on the global stage.

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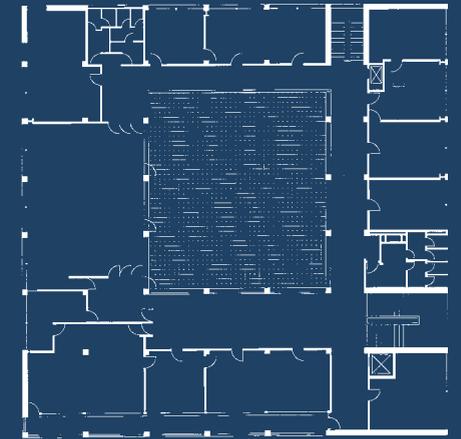
Niamh Moore is a lecturer and Fellow in Teaching and Academic Development at UCD. Her research focuses on urban politics and regeneration. She is author of *Dublin Docklands Reinvented: the post industrial regeneration of a European City quarter* (Four Courts Press, 2008).

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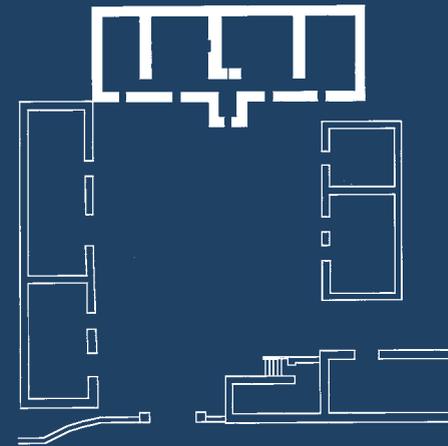
Tuam: Construction 2008

A2 ARCHITECTS

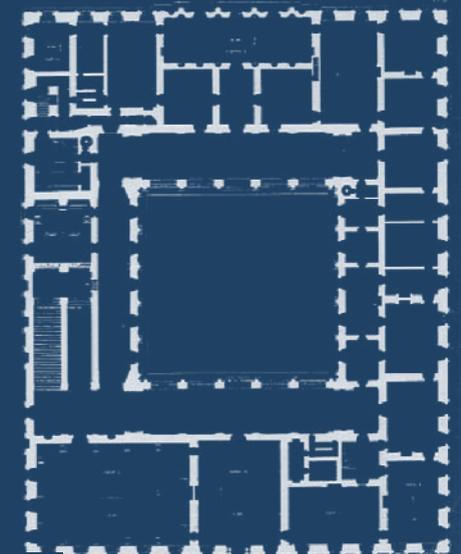
An existing 1920s cottage is incorporated into a courtyard house accommodating a raised kitchen garden at its core. Three precedents in courtyard typology were considered in its design process: Palazzo Farnese, Rome, Italy, by Antonio da Sangallo the Younger and Michelangelo, c.1530-50; Casa del Fascio, Como, Italy by Giuseppe Terragni 1932-36, and finally the Irish vernacular cottage and outbuildings. Three characteristics are common to these precedents: the creation of sheltered useable microclimate, the colonisation of spaces around the house with planar facades, and the use of existing context to hold a strong datum line.



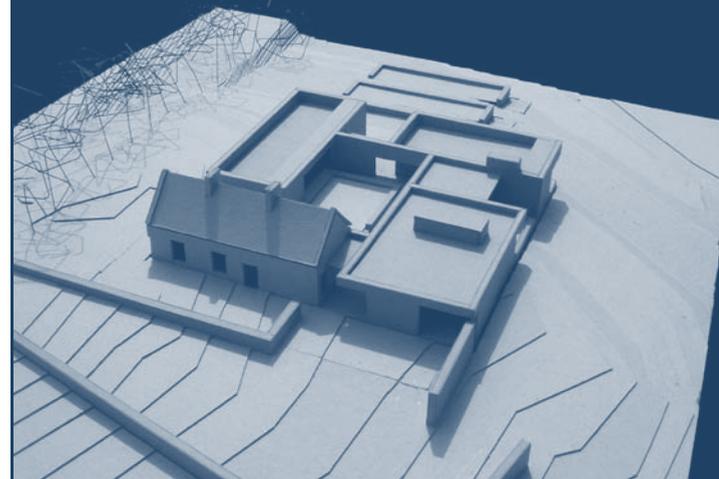
Casa del Fascio, Como, Italy by Giuseppe Terragni 1932-36



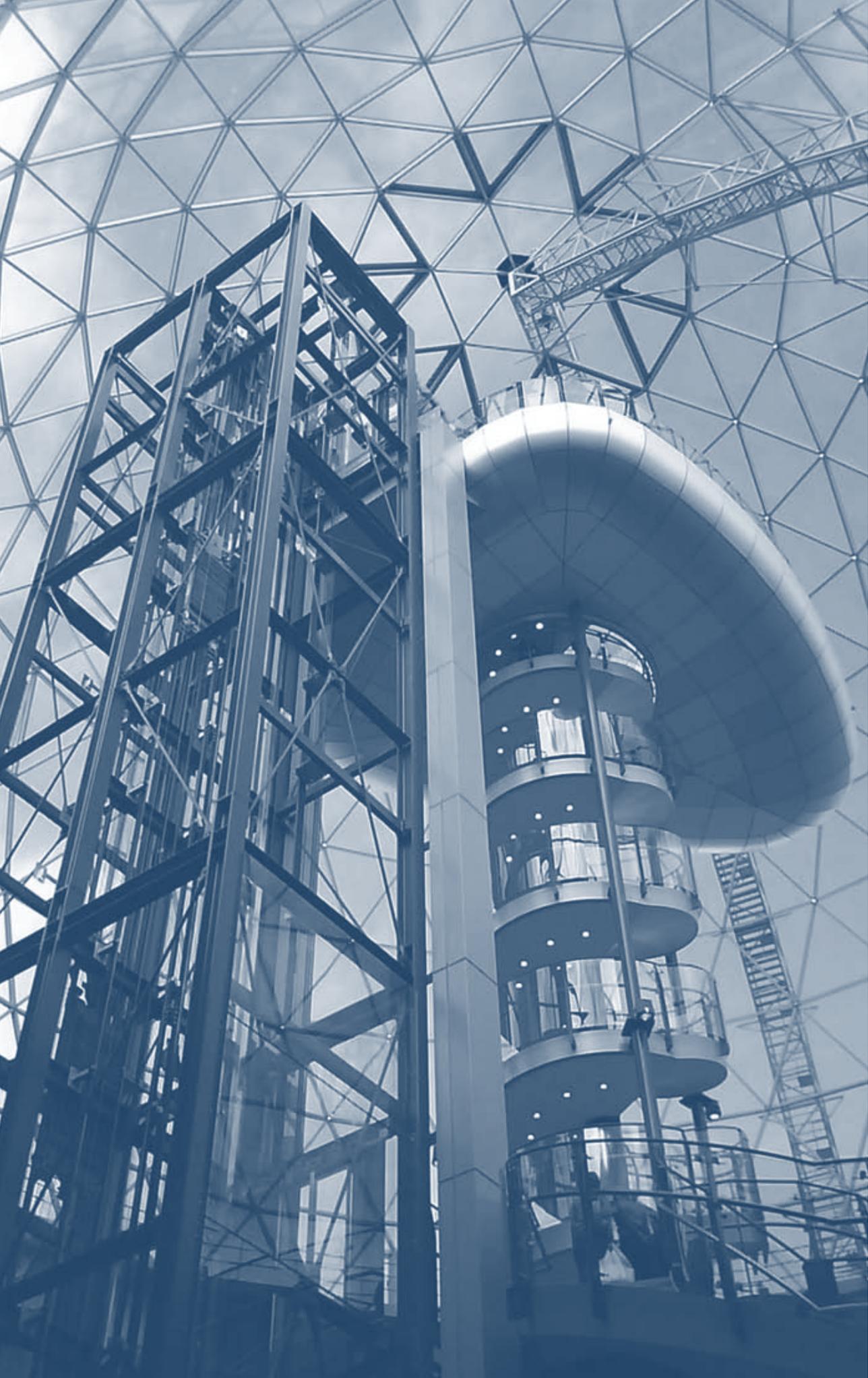
Irish vernacular cottage and outbuildings



Palazzo Farnese, Rome, Italy, by Antonio da Sangallo the Younger and Michelangelo, c.1530-50



Peter Carroll and Caoimhan Murphy
established A2 Architects in 2005.



19

Re-brand or Retain: Global versus Local

LISA McALINDEN

Belfast is a city playing catch-up. The increased number of cranes on its skyline in recent years has been one indication of the extent of its regeneration; the city is re-branding itself and attempting to establish a new identity while breaking free of its old associations with *the Troubles*.

Patrick Geddes was someone who understood the power of regeneration and believed that the things that made a place unique should be both utilised and emphasised. He was interested in understanding why a settlement was located where it was, how it grew and the reasons why; to understand the 'locality' whilst being aware of that place's role within wider society. One of his most famous mottos was 'Think Global, Act Local'. Could Belfast's regenerators set to gain from paying heed to what Geddes had to say?

Among a wide variety of interests, Geddes studied the growth of settlements, and this life-long preoccupation earned him the title, 'The Father of Town Planning'. He worked throughout the world and understood that the reason a settlement initially grows is due to the presence of particular resources in the area that causes people to settle there to live and work. When this occurs a place is created which draws in more people; the settlement grows and a history is created - which should be understood in an effort to understand what is unique about that particular place. 'Place-Work-Folk' was Geddes' mantra; his approach to urbanism is perhaps more relevant today than ever. The world is becoming a smaller place, with modern technology and transport bringing people and places closer together. However, there is a danger that places can adapt a global style and the local and vernacular be lost. With the recent drive towards increased protection of the environment the growing re-emphasis on the use of local materials and building methods echoes another of Geddes' key beliefs.

Geddes' theories on settlement and urbanism were put to the test in the Old Town of Edinburgh. Now a World Heritage Site, its cobbled streets and narrow closes make it one of the main attractions of the city. However, it was once an undesirable, neglected area consisting mainly of slums. Geddes and his wife moved into the area and working with local people they began to restore the existing fabric of the area. Geddes began to map the Old Town - most significantly its leftover spaces. These parcels of land were then converted into gardens by the local community, some of which remain today.

In Glasgow, however, an antithetical approach to urbanism was deployed. Like cities the world over, during the 1960's and 1970's the preferred solution to Glasgow's problems was to demolish and rebuild. Its inner city communities were torn apart and its residents moved to new developments on the city outskirts. A fractured city with rings of wasteland and dereliction was created; strong community spirit and a sense of belonging were lost in many areas. An estimated 260 tower blocks were constructed in and around Glasgow during this time. Today 200 of these towers have now been proposed for demolition. Once again widespread demolition and re-housing of communities is proposed. Are the mistakes of the past being repeated in Glasgow with yet another *tabula rasa* approach to urban renewal?

Meanwhile, Belfast is at a crucial stage in its development. Shaking off the ghosts of it's troubled past and looking to the future, optimism permeates the city. The decisions taken now will influence the type of place that Belfast will become for generations. The city is currently being re-branded with a new logo splashed



across the city. *The Belfast Brand Guidelines* proclaim, “The time is right for us to build a thriving, vibrant city. Proud of our heritage, we embrace the future to build an even better Belfast.” Look to the future while remembering the past. Promising stuff. But what actually springs to mind when one thinks of Belfast and its identity? A native of Belfast living away from the city recently responded with the following list: murals, ‘dead-on’ people, the Duke of York and the John Hewitt pubs, Harland & Wolff, the Albert Clock, the City Hall and Stormont Parliament Buildings. The glossy image versus the reality? Perhaps both need to work in tandem for the city to market itself successfully on a global scale.

The aforementioned list is itself a summary of Geddes’ beliefs. The murals pertain to the history and past of the city; ‘dead-on’ people are the folk who live and work there, the pubs are its gathering places; its places of work and historical landmarks – all places where the past, present and future of the city are discussed and decided. Murals, top of the list, have long been an intrinsic part of this city of division and segregation. They have been used in the past by various communities to demarcate their neighbourhoods and beliefs, relaying messages to the wider city and beyond. These murals are now tourist attractions. Although recently they have featured local heroes such as George Best rather than paramilitary paraphernalia, they continue to be indicators of what lies close to the hearts of the people in the surrounding streets.

The ‘Re-imagining Communities’ initiative was launched in July 2006 by the Arts Council to provide funding of £3.3m over a period of 3 years to support ‘local communities as they replace divisive symbols and murals of the past with images that are a positive celebration of the future’. Images of the Grim Reaper, King Billy, and other paramilitary murals will be replaced with artwork relating to more positive aspects of the city - such as the shipyards and Cavehill.

The new Victoria Square development in the heart of the city centre recently opened with much fanfare, introducing a multitude of high-end designers shops and restaurants to the city, as well as re-housing existing outlets in glossier surroundings. A large part of the city centre was demolished to facilitate the development. In some ways the development has the air of a ‘global product’; however it has also provided a new symbol for the city – its shining glass dome, sitting like the cherry on a cake, visible from many parts of the city and beyond.

Covering 185 acres, a quarter the area of the rest of Belfast, the Titanic Quarter, formerly known as Queen’s Island, is the home of the Harland & Wolff shipyard and the birthplace of the Titanic. This area is to be transformed into the largest mixed-use waterfront development in Europe. Very few original structures remain on the site; those that do include the famous Harland & Wolff yellow cranes and the Harland & Wolff headquarters. The area’s master plan was the brainchild of American urban designer Eric Kuhne who worked with local architects to complete the proposals. The development will consist almost entirely of new buildings, mostly designed by local architects. Following the segregation of the city in recent decades it will provide an opportunity for an entirely neutral environment to be created, yet the success of the development remains to be seen. The master plan aims to create strong links with the river Lagan but will the quarter have strong enough links with the rest of the city? In a relatively small city with a population of almost 600,000, can a development of such massive scale be sustained?

The Titanic Quarter is not the only new quarter being created in the city. Existing parts of the city which already have a clear identity have been re-branded - including the already successful Cathedral Quarter, located in the north of the city centre. With an abundance of bars, pubs, clubs, restaurants, galleries, theatres and hotels, there are a number of examples of successful re-invention of the existing urban fabric throughout this quarter. The Queen’s Quarter around the University, a favorite haunt of students, is a conservation area with many streets of the traditional Belfast red brick terraced housing, the bread and butter of Belfast’s housing stock. And the area around the Falls Road, to the west of the city, has been re-branded the Gaeltacht Quarter, its history of Irish culture and language drawing many tourists into the area for music, Guinness and craic.

For Belfast’s regeneration to truly succeed it must take place in the communities and neighborhoods of the city. Although Belfast must market itself on a global scale, it should not be to the detriment of the existing fabric of the city. Care must be taken that the things that make the city unique are not ignored in the rush to produce a new global Belfast. The sanitisation of the city is not to be the solution.

The impact of new developments on local communities, particularly those developments that are developer led, are often ignored. As one local scrawled over a hoarding on a site near the Ormeau Road in south Belfast - “Regeneration is social cleansing”. On another hoarding for new “yuppy” apartments in the Shankill area of west Belfast the message reads “Regeneration not Gentrification” [sic]. It seems not everyone perceives regeneration as a positive process. Problems arise when communities feel no sense of ‘ownership’ over the development and this also applies to the city as a whole. If the people who live and work in the city feel a sense of ownership and pride towards the ‘new’ Belfast then it will succeed. Therein lies the challenge – ‘Think Global - Act Local’.

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Researching a history of the Architectural Association of Ireland: Part II – built/critical/absent reactions to the AAI lectures

ELLEN ROWLEY

In the following article, the second part of a retrospective account of the AAI, Ellen Rowley presents a historiographic review of the Association's lecture programme. The review is an attempt to grapple with the lectures' essential and contradictory nature as being influential yet ephemeral and introverted within the culture of Irish architecture. As a continuous and central activity, the lecture programme frames the Association during its history; certainly the AAI's invitation to many leading international forces of post-war architecture demands enquiry. However the lack of critical reaction to lectures by the contemporary architectural press or otherwise, makes their impact and legacy difficult to measure without descending into the overly reductive realm of cause and effect.

Introduction: zeitgeist criticism

In 2001 Jean-Louis Cohen provided the Architectural Association of Ireland (AAI) with a flattering insight into the 'critical internationalism' of contemporary Irish architecture. And we were pleased. At the dawn of a new millennium it was good to hear about our 'tolerance', our 'irony', our 'modesty', our prudence and our pertinence; that according to Cohen Irish architecture does *'not participate in a desire to erase the existing cities and landscapes, but instead, in a series of research threads...testing in some way the elasticity of situations and typological rules.'* Whatever Cohen really meant by our better buildings as fluid 'research threads' it didn't matter; importantly, he justified his analysis of a national collective architectural sensibility in the suitably ambiguous terms of 'shared attitudes' rather than pointing to a tangible sameness of formal language or scale. His address managed to encourage the younger generation headed up that year by Grainne Hassett and Tom de Paor, and simultaneously affirm the reigning hierarchy of de Blacam and Meagher and Group '91 by reminding us of for instance, Grafton Architects' penchant for Ticino and Sheila O'Donnell and John Tuomey's affinity with Yves Lion.

In short, Cohen's criticism was much to our liking. It situated us in an international, albeit Eurocentric forum and it benevolently celebrated our historic conscientiousness or at least, our hoped-for heritage awareness. His citing of the palimpsest nature of the Trinity College campus was an empathetic response to the historic baseline from which the two current generations of Irish architects - established and burgeoning alike - claim to spring, and was echoed five years later, in 2006, by Spanish critic Luis Fernandez-Galiano. Again Fernandez-Galiano's address to the AAI evoked the rather romanticised eighteenth century Dublin of Gandon and Burke and again, the impressions of the outsider were welcome; herein an international critic of repute told us about our *'tenacity, attention to urban context and attachment to rural landscape, professional craftsmanship in the details and tactile sensibility in the materials.'* But moving on from Cohen's comparatively doe-eyed celebration of Irish architectural contextualism, Luis Fernandez-Galiano's insight penetrated our dreaded suburban psyche by rightly commenting on the dysfunctional state of our sprawling built-environment:

Material progress and cultural modernisation have produced destitute margins and faded identities, redundant people and indifferent lives...the real-estate boom that colonises the landscapes of the island with a unanimous extension of single-family homes, a colossal dispersion of dwellings that makes the trips from home to work endless...

Having just self-examined the 'dark-side' of the sprawl, endemic in Irish architectural development, through the hypothetical project *SubUrban to SuperRural* for the Venice Biennale 2006, Ireland's architectural intelligentsia embraced Fernandez-Galiano's observations to the AAI a few months later. While his literary and tiger metaphors may have been slightly overcooked for the native appetite, Fernandez-Galiano's commentary, like Cohen's before him, was deemed appropriate and timely. In fact, we couldn't have said it better ourselves! So, it would seem that both commentators had captured Ireland's architectural zeitgeist, and the shift in tone between each account mirrored the shift in real-time space-architecture between the year 2000 and the present day.

The poignancy of the AAI members' response to invited foreign critic lecturers is fore-grounded then by the example of the mostly negative, almost hostile reaction to the latest foreign critic's address given by Paris' Cite de *L'Architecture's* director and former architecture critic for *Le Figaro*, Francis Rambert, (November 2007). Rambert's address quickly became a homage to President Sarkozy's petits projets through the exposition of a brave new digital world of virtual skins and vegetal roofing systems, cladding and enveloping urban gardens and interpretive dance studios. Aside from the token inclusion of Dominic Stevens' Mimetic House (Leitrim, 2006) and Heneghan Peng's work at the Giant's Causeway (Antrim, ongoing), all of the projects refer to a supposedly different disposition to that of the Architectural Association of Ireland; one that pertains to the sameness of a global and technologised aesthetic at the knife-edge of architectural experiment from which somehow the culture of Irish architecture seeks to differentiate itself (despite the fact that even a cursory glance at Dublin's riverside development in 2008 with its Calatrava bridges, its Roche conference centre and its Libeskind opera house undermines such a differentiation).

However, of interest here is that Rambert's address seems to have been mildly abhorrent because it displayed no empathy towards a specifically Irish way of making architecture. His disengaged presentation recalls another Frenchman's dismissive account, albeit quite differently so, of the state of Irish architecture from *Le Figaro* in 1961 which was recounted to the AAI by the then President, Niall Meagher:

...the melancholy air of [Irish] villages with houses and churches where Architecture reaches the quintessence of banality, of mediocrity and a lack of feeling... It's a mystery how the Irishman who is so gay and communicative, so likeable and friendly, [can] live amid such ugly surroundings.

Meagher cited the *Le Figaro* report because, in his view, it signalled impartial evidence as to the impoverished nature of Irish architecture at that time. These examples highlight, in the first instance, the presupposition that the foreign voice equates at least impartiality and at most greater wisdom or deeper insight; a presupposition, I argue, which has informed the AAI's lecture programme during the past half century and more. In the second instance, these examples, as emblematic, point to the illusive purpose of the AAI's lectures. Do the lectures have an explicitly didactic role and if so, do we want to learn more about ourselves - are we yearning for the glare of a reflexive lens, considering the ongoing dearth of architectural criticism in our small community? Or conversely, do we want the lectures to pitch us into the real-time experience of a glossy European architectural journal?

Through an overview analysis of the AAI lecture programme in the second half of the twentieth century but with emphasis on the 1960s, this essay proposes that the lectures be read a priori as a representation of the Association's priorities and leaning at a given time. Of course the lectures should not be understood as a singular or static annual body but rather, as a multifarious and unpredictable set of discourses. Certainly, the assorted tone and aim of lectures is stressed through the cited examples of the present-day foreign critics' lectures; the critic's lecture today is generally anomalous within the lecture programme in that, with the phasing out of the AAI's presidential addresses in the mid 1970s, this foreign voice has come to fill the gap in terms of *zeitgeist* polemics. Whereby previously each president's inaugural or valedictory lecture sought to describe dominant themes or conditions affecting the contemporaneous culture of Irish architecture, now we look to the objective outsider for such a narrative. But even within the understanding of the AAI's lectures as multifarious, there emerges patterns and trends to do with lectures' subject matter or invited speakers' origins; the ebb and flow of the foreign/local and the architect/non-architect being the two central patterns and concerns. As such, my rhetorical questions as to the didactic or reflective purpose of the lectures are a means of considering the lectures collectively as a historical document from which we might learn more about the extent of foreign influence or the preoccupation with technology, for instance.

Lectures: historiographic ephemera

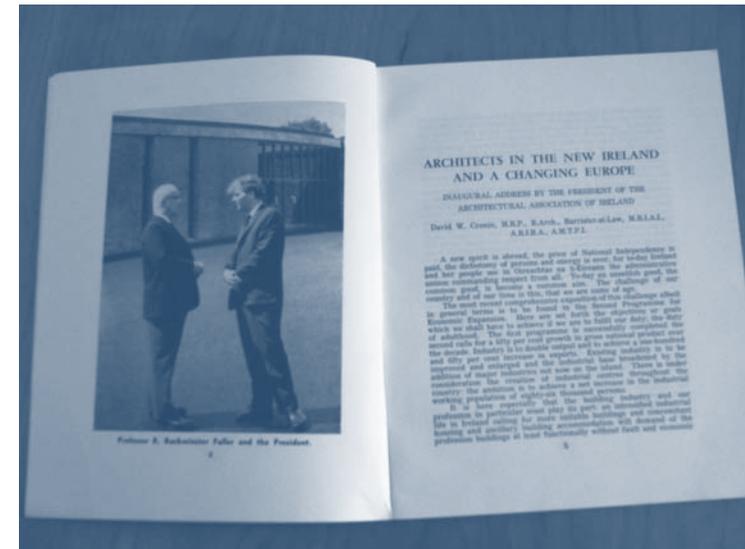
It is not too obvious to state at this point that implicit in the organisation of and the reception to the Architectural Association of Ireland as a semi-educational body is its ongoing lecture programme, now in its 112th year. Perhaps the most consistent aspect of an ever-changing cultural organisation, the lectures in their diversity underpin the identity of the chameleon AAI. The ephemeral nature of the lecture as a medium wherein words and images float over, through and about the collective, reflects the transient and dynamic nature of the AAI itself. In this way, the lecture could be understood as a metaphor for the Association; where the Association acts as cultural custodian of Irish architecture in an international context, the lecture is its central tool exposing Irish architects to leading cultural forces of international architecture.

The difficulty of using the lectures as a medium for historical research is that practically-speaking they were never discussed in a public forum and rarely appraised by the architectural press in a critical manner. This critical void into which the lectures fall after-the-event has been an ongoing feature and a central weakness, and indeed despite the current culture of podcasts, it continues in the present day with the only respite coming in the mid-1980s when for a period the *Irish Times'* new and hungry environmental correspondent, Frank McDonald, recorded AAI Irish interest and planning related symposia and debates.

Of course, the leader writer of *The Irish Builder* reviewed key lectures of architectural interest but only sporadically. For instance, an overview of the journal's twenty or so volumes of 1964 reveals short paragraphs of subjective opinion dotted amongst advertisements, outlining the content of say, Mr Andrew Ganly's lecture on Greek architecture entitled, *A night with the gods!* or Percy Le Clerc's presentation on the state of the conservation of national monuments. And sometimes, as in the instance of the critique of a lecture by Christopher Dardis in January of 1964 on the Richards Medical Building (Philadelphia, 1958-60) by Louis Kahn, *The Irish Builder* is surprisingly descriptive, presenting us with an invaluable second-hand experience of the AAI event:

A large audience attended and saw first a cine film of the building with the camera moving over the whole building joint by joint. There were two screens and these changed as we progressed to the still slides. The slide on the left would show, say, the plan of part of the building and on the right we would see the progress made as this was brought into being. Mr Dardis told us of Mr Kahn's belief that beginnings are ugly and later refining brings beauty... Although born about 1900 Kahn did not build anything until 1956. Like many real artists, Mr Dardis said Kahn has been a lot of his life unemployed or has spent his time teaching. Kahn is acclaimed by man as being one of the most creative architects of the day and in Mr Dardis he has found himself a good preacher for this side of the Atlantic.

But before we speculate on the educational impact of such a lecture and indeed, the legacy of AAI lectures generally – as we know, marked protagonists of post-war Irish architecture such as Noel Dowley and Shane de Blacam later studied with Louis Kahn at Pennsylvania – the point of interest here, being historiographic, is that this steadiest member of the Irish architectural press omitted to review possibly the single most significant lecture event of the AAI calendar from 1964: a lecture entitled *World Design* by Buckminster Fuller on 7th July that year.



Buckminster Fuller and John Cronin, AAI Green Book, 1964

One might glean from this notable omission that the culturally highbrow activities of the Association were not a journalistic priority, and especially not when pitched against or amidst the increasingly frenetic activity of the construction industry and architectural profession as the drive towards American flavoured modernisation accelerated during the 1960s. Sure enough, it would seem that the journal was too interested in John Johanssen's American Embassy in Ballsbridge, Dublin (1961-'64) or indeed, the impending arrival of the edge city mass social housing phenomenon at Ballymun, North Dublin (1966-

'69], to record the rhetoric of an international yet eccentric design icon in the form of Bucky Fuller. As the sardonic pen of Altire *from The Irish Architect and Contractor* gleefully tells us, 'June is generally a bit of a silly season as regards "hard" news in the building industry; but this time there seems to have been plenty of it. And then, of course, there'll be Buckminster Fuller next month!' So, we do know that Fuller was coming to town but, with no geodesic domes or dymaxion house prototypes springing up in the Irish landscape after his address, the historian begins to wonder what impact Fuller's presence had at all? Which brings us to the Association's own annual journal, the Green Book and herein lies the only trace of the seminal figure's visit in the form of a photograph of Fuller with the president David Cronin.

The absence of records of this lecture in the *Green Book* is unsurprising when we analyse its content generally. As such, the provision of relatively empty statistics to do with lecture attendance rather than any critical analysis of lecture subjects seems to be the preferable practice. For example, in the annual of 1949-'51 the average lecture attendance is reported as being forty-one members in 1948/'49, which decreases to twenty-seven members in 1949/'50 and then rises to thirty-six in 1950/'51, and so on. The subject matter of lectures during these particular years varies from *Danish Architecture* by Mr. Mogens Didriksen in 1949 to *Some Factors in Dublin Development* by Dr. Maurice Craig in 1950 to Housing and Town-planning Congress, Amsterdam, 1950 by Daithi Hanly or *Architecture in the Festival of Britain* by Hugh Casson. And from this ensemble of diverse architectural discourses by local and foreign commentators alike, only one lecture is reprinted by the Association's journal – that is, *Post-War Schools in Britain* which was delivered by Mr. C. G. Stillman in 1950. Considering the potential relevance of all the listed lectures, with Dublin Corporation embarking on its urban maisonette block housing campaign shortly after Hanly's lecture on Dutch housing and with the potent effect felt by the triumphant Festival of Britain in the imaginations and consequent travel and working plans of many Irish architects during the mostly arid decade, the choice to reprint Stillman's address on schools seems decidedly random.

The abiding impression of the Green Book content is its inherent lack of consistency from year to year which is highlighted, specifically in relation to lectures, by a note in the Association's minute books from a meeting on 6th September 1949 where it is recorded that, '*Mr. Le Clerc proposed that Mr. Varming's lecture of the last session be published in the "Green Book". It was decided to ask Mr. Maskell if it would be possible to do so at the next meeting.*' This archival glimpse at the behind the scenes workings of the Association reveals the lack of prescription, beyond the consistently reprinted presidents' addresses, which seems to have defined the Green Books, and amounted to no editorial continuity and the consequent arbitrary choice of reprinted lectures, lecture-reviews and articles therein. In the Green Book of 1959/'60 the editor sought to reprint lectures, hoping to counter their ephemeral nature, but his ambitions were thwarted from the outset:

The spoken word being as ephemeral as it is, with the idea of preserving some of the jewels of contemporary architectural thought which are to be found at the AAI the Editor had hoped that he would be able to include in this issue of the Green Book one of the year's lectures...Almost to a man, this year's crop of lecturers spoke from unintelligible hieroglyphics on the backs of envelopes, or else delivered fluent extempore addresses which were incapable of being recorded by the overtaxed editorial staff.

And when the editor does manage to appraise the lecture programme he does so with such wit and irreverence that we might question the seriousness of the whole endeavour. In describing a presentation entitled Structure by the significant engineer Ove Arup on 14th December 1959, our *Green Book* protagonist states,

Those who were present at Ove Arup's discourse on Structure can well appreciate the impossibility of rendering an account of the Great Man's wisdom. Having listened in respectful wonderment to the endless stream of fascinating profundities on the philosophy of structure and its fulfilment your Editor could only echo Meehawl MacMurrachu's reverent rejoinder to the Philosopher in the Crock of Gold. "I give you my word Sir that I don't know what you are talking about at all."

Following this the editor explains that he missed Kevin Fox's lecture on Life Down Under on 26th January 1960 and Robin Walker's Plan for Ireland two weeks later due to '*prior engagement and attack of the plague*'. However, he does assure his readers that '*spies reported the excellence of both these lectures*'.

There may be no doubt that the act of recording was not a priority; that the mocking tone of the *Lecture Notes*, which is wedged in between a Myles Na Gopaleen-esque observation by Niall Montgomery entitled *The Trojan Horse* and Wilfred Cantwell's typically heavy handed and pedantic presidential address, *A Programme of Work*, resonates more tunefully than the plodding cadence of a witness statement. Furthermore, it seems contradictory that the dogged and statistic-laden rhetoric of Cantwell be juxtaposed with the amusing and somewhat glib commentary by the editor. But this juxtaposition highlights precisely the difficulty in measuring the impact of the AAI's lecture programme; there is an unbridgeable gap, ironic and contradictory in flavour, between Cantwell's serious address as emblematic of the calibre of lectures generally and the flippant editorial as representative of the formal reception to those lectures. Considering how central the lecture programme is to the Association as a cultural semi-educational body, our inability to measure them critically (either contemporaneously or retrospectively) arises in the first instance from the lectures' ephemeral nature, which in turn serves to undermine their significance.

So we may ask: if you do not discuss and/or critically absorb something after the event, then do you counter the meaning of the event in the first place? Contributing to our perception of lectures as ephemera, conveniently dismissible and easy to repudiate, is the passive state of the audience in a lecture situation. The lecture is indeed the space of collective learning which is a cultural phenomenon emanating from theatrical performance and religious congregation ritual. But as a structured learning experience the lecture is relatively non-participatory; it is the site for public and didactic learning rather than intimate and discursive study. It is a form of discourse that is a by-product of rhetoric and founded in the monologue, whereby the distance between speaker and audience is emphasised above all else.

In the case of the AAI lectures then, this distance becomes either the space for escapism or that of instruction; though mostly, the experience is recalled in the tone of the escapist. AAI lecture reviews tend to betray, over and over again, the sense of the audience as cultural tourist at the site of a show-and-tell

monologue. Our erratic Irish Builder reviewer from 1964 describes two wholly dissimilar lectures – one instructive discourse in June by Mr. J. Neil Downes on *The Story of Modern Architecture* and another illustrative presentation in November by photographer, Richard Deegan on Greece - in the similar terms of a sightseer:

Mr. Downes brought us on an extremely entertaining and interesting trip through the turn of the century and the changing of Europe and the growth of our modern age in architecture.

Mr. Deegan's commentary to his excellent colour slides and the push button change of the slides themselves made for an enjoyable night. He took us from Parnassus through Olympia, Corinth, Delphi to the Parthenon mixing the classic with the modern, people with the landscape to give us a most educative talk.

The lecture is described in both instances, and others besides, as a cinematic journey, which although inspirational, is a mostly uninvolved experience. And if the documentation of the Association's lectures pitches the audience, falsely or otherwise, into the realm of passenger seat grand tourist and in a large part weakens their cultural significance within Irish architecture, we must now penetrate their role more deeply by asking who that audience was.

Lectures: hermetic endeavours

In origin, the lectures were born out of the need to augment architectural apprentices' technical education and so, the lectures from the earliest point in the 1870s read like any architectural technology curriculum with lessons in *Fireproof Construction* delivered by Mr. James H. Owen, or *The Application of Wires to Correct Acoustic Defects in Buildings* instructed by the 'don', Thomas Drew. Following a lapse or two in activity, the Association was reformed in 1896 with its *modus operandi* and aims more clearly elucidated:

The Dublin AA...has been formed to carry out the following objects: - (1) to afford to pupils and younger members, advantages of education beyond the daily routine of office work, on similar lines to the London AA, viz., by classes of instruction, access to standard works of Architecture, visiting buildings, old and new, and general social intercourse, and discussion. (2) To ensure a more general interest in Architecture, by means of occasional popular lectures and exhibitions.

Again, lectures are positioned as a central activity of the reformulated Association with the President of the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland (RIAI), Thomas Drew congratulating the action as '*a co-operative movement on the part of younger members of the architectural fraternity to establish an Improvement Society of their own*', and affirming the centrality of lectures by suggesting that, 'lectures might be delivered under the auspices of the Association on special subjects'. From the outset then, lectures are the AAI's primary communicative tool. In fact, I would argue that the lecture programme presents us with an unbroken horizon, which frames the Association through its history; that for instance, even in the face of cultural isolation resulting from geographical separation and neutrality during the Second World War, AAI lectures continued to happen. A note in the Association's minute books from 31st May 1944 highlights the steadfastness of the programme as follows:

Mr Butler brought forward a short preliminary list of feasible speakers, pointing out, that as it was not feasible to foresee any change in the present prevailing conditions of cross-Channel travel restrictions, it appeared advisable to make plans on the assumption that only speakers from Ireland would be available...

But although the lecture programme was omnipresent, refusing even to be interrupted by international crisis, this does not infer consistency upon lectures' quality, direction or indeed their consumption over time. While the lectures were established to meet the educational needs of the younger members of the architectural community, already by the 1930s with the growing success of the two formal schools of architecture at the National University and Bolton Street, they were being realigned away from their initial didactic direction.

Plucking some lectures out from this key transitional moment of the late 1930s and into the 1940s such as *The Electrical Distribution System of Eire* by Mr. Murphy from 1942 or *Heating Installation* by Mr. Illingworth from 1947 or *Slab Construction as an Example of Co-Ordination of Building Parts* by Mr. Arup in 1948, it is obvious that technical topics continue to be delivered, and education in matters of architectural technology persists as a priority. However, significantly, the audience for these lectures had shifted from the hungry architectural apprentice to the early-mid career architect in search of, one imagines, exotic distraction and/or incidental information. Proof of this demographic shift in terms of lecture attendance and AAI membership profile comes from the Association's minute books of 5th January 1955 which record that, '*some Bolton Street students were wondering if our lecturers could lecture to them also. It was decided to tell them to join the Association*'. The entry goes on to reveal the actual distance between the AAI and the student body by suggesting that the Association should feed information about lectures to the two schools.

Now that, at this mid-twentieth century juncture the AAI's lecture programme has moved away from its tangible position as primary educator of the lacking student, its influence becomes even harder to gauge. When the target audience is less explicitly active in terms of discovering, absorbing and as such learning, the net result of the lecture is more subliminal, transient and rhetorical. This is the point made by Piaras McCionnaith, the president of the Association in 1961, when on the rare occasion that the president critically commented on the potential benefit of lectures, he exclaimed: '*We listen impassively to lectures... Rarely do we use the valuable material which we hear and should absorb, as ammunition for positive analysis and action of our own*'. In highlighting the ephemeral nature of the lecture and other activities, McCionnaith was concerned about the essentially passive and introverted outcomes of the Association. His quarrel was primarily with the hermetic tendencies of the AAI,

We are too prone to gather together and turn inwards. We are the huddle in American football, we are the cognoscenti who foregather merely to toss the ball of knowledge from one to the other while leaving those outside our secret ring baffled.

McCionnaith called for engaged dialogue between the Association and the wider socio-agri-industrial and economic contexts in the country. Such a call for outreach activity is met with the fairly token inclusion of

non-architectural lecture subjects and debates throughout the 1960s – farming (1962), weather (1964), photography (1967), theatre design (1968), airplane design (1969) – and interestingly, comes to define the more contextualist and financially-challenged Association later in the 1980s. But importantly, the appeal for public engagement by the AAI is not new, being already present in its original dictum of 1896 which sets out *‘To ensure a more general interest in Architecture, by means of occasional popular lectures and exhibitions’*, and it undoubtedly underpinned the presidents’ addresses, if not the Association’s actual activities, during the transitional 1940s. In reality, McCionnaith’s dissatisfaction with the hermetic endeavours of the AAI presents one moment in a continuum which courted the necessity of outreach; this same courtship had established the short-lived Joint AAI and RIAI Public Relations Committee in the 1950s. But where McCionnaith directed his ire towards the Association’s insular and in his view ineffectual lecture programme, the PR Committee focussed on the potential of both the architectural exhibition and the newspaper to curry favour with and educate the masses.

It seems to me that if the Joint Public Relations Committee failed to concern itself with, let alone retouch the format of, the mostly hermetically sealed AAI lecture programme, then the lectures were always meant to be what they are today, in 2008: inspirational insights into contemporary foreign architecture for younger Irish architects.

Lectures: chicken-and-egg

The critical void into which lectures-as-ephemera mostly fall and then their hermetic tendency in terms of architecture for architects, make it easy for the historian to avoid the big teleological question which must now be addressed: what was the impact of the Association’s lectures on the bricks’n’mortar/ concrete’n’steel of contemporaneous Irish architecture?

A well-worn example of the AAI lecture as architectural conduit must be briefly recounted. Walter Gropius was invited by the AAI in 1936, the year before Michael Scott was president of the Association and according to Scott, the famous architect was hosted by him, *‘He came to Dublin and I toted him around the place. I wined and dined him and also took him on to Glendalough. He loved Ireland...loved the eighteenth-century quality of Ireland, thought that was very splendid.’* The lengthy lecture-review by ‘Wisbech’ in *The Irish Builder* was positive and reveals that an audience of three hundred – *‘probably the largest audience ever assembled for a lecture on architecture in this country’* - came to hear Gropius present a summary of his latest book. It would seem that the usual argument of traditional versus modern was thrashed out but that much to the audience’s surprise, *‘...at the conclusion of the lecture the audience were treated to the unprecedented experience of hearing an eloquent, if occasionally equivocal, plea for the new architecture from so representative a conservative as Professor R. M. Butler...’* We can hardly hail this moment in 1936 as the turning point for the widespread acceptance of modernism by Irish architecture but in the terms of dubiously charting the genealogy of a building, I would argue that Gropius’ visit is intimately connected with the only surviving example of Michael Scott’s social housing architecture in Dublin’s city centre.



Ffrench Mullen House, Courtesy Iseult Kirwan

This building, Ffrench-Mullen House of 1944 is a rectilinear flat-roofed structure comprising thirteen flats whose front elevation forms the street-line of Charlemont Street and is clad in fine tile panels and cement plaster. Certainly the exterior of the building in terms of the fenestration, the stucco effect of render and tiles and the flat roof echoes much of the architecture from the 1927 workers’ housing estate in Stuttgart, *Weissenhofsiedlung*, and Gropius’ *Konsumerverein* in the Torten Estate near Dessau. It is clear that Scott’s block is a superficial evocation of the much admired International Style, something to be gleaned easily from British journals, for example. But what is interesting is reading this block as a consequence of Scott’s liaison with Gropius in Dublin and both men’s reaction to the social housing blocks being designed by and constructed under Dublin Corporation Housing Architect Herbert Simms during the period and until Simms’ untimely death in 1948. Scott recalls that Gropius *“was horrified at the recent buildings, particularly the flats Dublin Corporation was building. He couldn’t believe his eyes; he thought they were the world’s worst... They were quite terrible those Corporation flats – I couldn’t agree more with Gropius.”*

Such commentary enables us assume Ffrench-Mullen House (the layout of the flats and the overall form of the block) to be something of a retort to Simms’ blocks, initiated in no small part by the encounter with Gropius. Where Simms’ blocks were clearly influenced in terms of material (brickwork), form (curved corners etc.) and layout (courtyards, street facades) by the architecture of Amsterdam Expressionism, Scott’s inspiration for Ffrench-Mullen House comes from even more contemporary sources in Holland, Germany and England. Also, Scott’s original design for the Ffrench-Mullen scheme constitutes the second phase of flats which were commissioned by a Public Utility Society (PUS) to re-house tenement dwellers in the area of Charlemont Street. The first block, St Ultan’s Flats (demolished 2001, architect unknown at that stage) was a larger inelegant structure and this second phase, commissioned in collision with Gropius’ visit in 1936, planned by Scott and his then partner Norman Good, was much more in keeping with the pre-war International Style aesthetic than the earlier phase.

There is an undoubted chicken-and-egg relationship between the lecture programme and trends in Irish architecture, and this half-told tale of Gropius and Scott reduces the relationship into a knowable and linear story. But what comes first? Impossible to answer, we can conclude that the relationship between the AAI’s cultural activity and the younger generation’s architectural production is intimately bound-up; one leads into the other in a mobius strip correlation. What has become more obvious in the AAI’s recent history, as a national cultural body within a global distanceless world, is the Association’s tendency to *react* to the contemporary architectural climate rather than to *prescribe* to it; so that the encounter with the invited lecturer has already occurred through the pages of the glossy European journal long before the first-hand happening of the lecture. Also obvious is that the impact of the immediate lecture can never be isolated from the architect’s ongoing experience of new technologies and/or an occasional adventurous client and/or experimentation with materials and/or travel incident and/or filmic-novel-artwork assimilation! In short, the story of architectural influence is, as Harold Bloom proclaims, complexly woven:

'Influence' is a metaphor, one that implicates a matrix of relationships – imagistic, temporal, spiritual, psychological – all of them ultimately defensive in their nature.

Bloom's metaphor is enriching, as it does not reduce the 'lecture and architecture' influence question to the dualistic terms of cause/effect, respond/prescribe, chicken/egg or Gropius/Scott's housing. The example of the unwieldy spider-like connection between American critic Vincent Scully's lecture to the Association on 11th April 1969 and Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Firhouse, County Dublin by John Meagher of De Blacam and Meagher Architects a decade later, 1976-'79, pushes Bloom's matrix metaphor into architectural practice. Unsurprisingly, much of Scully's address to the AAI (a repeat of a RIBA discourse) was taken up with the championing of Robert Venturi's architecture stating that, '*Venturi is the most intelligent spokesman and best architect of the new 'with it' world...*' Interestingly for us, Fr. Ronan Geary's inaugural presidential address to the Association a few years later in 1974 explains that Scully's 1969 lecture was the moment when the Irish architects may have been introduced to Venturi through the example of the Guild House in Philadelphia, and as Geary says, the AAI audience were so shocked at its banality that they decided to read Venturi's writings. In fact, Scully's visit to Ireland and his up-to-the-minute address followed closely from Robert Venturi's seminal publication of *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* in 1966 by MoMA New York in which Scully wrote the foreword. Bearing such timing in mind, it is not implausible that Scully's presentation signalled the first exposure of Irish architects to Robert Venturi's curious practice.

The central piece of this teleological puzzle linking Venturi to late 1970s Irish architectural production resides in Geary's own lecture which focuses on the need to adopt Venturi's complexity/contradiction building philosophy in Irish RC church design. He states that just as RC religion is contradictory with the God who is three in one at the same time, then church architecture should not accept unequivocal choice of liturgist or architect but should embrace everything from historic precedents to modern technologies, and enable the mass which is both sacrifice and banquet, private and public prayer. His call for the Church to acknowledge the billboard culture of the post-industrialist world pretty much coincided with the launch by the Dublin Diocese of a major church architectural competition in 1976. Where Geary felt church design must embrace the world as it is rather than create a simplified modernist version as it had been doing since Vatican II (1963) – '*the Church must go out into the world and accept it as it is, warts and all, rather than withdraw from it*' - the Diocese with Archbishop Ryan at the helm, needed to accommodate a sprawling population with a limited budget. And along came the final strand in this contrived web in the form of young architect John Meagher, to meet the Archbishop's needs. Meagher, within his newly founded partnership with Shane De Blacam, won the commission to design a new church for Firhouse, a burgeoning Dublin suburb. Significantly, he had just returned from a stint working in Robert Venturi's office in Philadelphia.

At first Meagher's design and the church as built today seem a far cry from the detritus-celebrating image-making architecture of the Venturi vernacular but pitching it in the terms of Geary's adapted translation of Venturi, the connection becomes clearer. At Our Lady of Mount Carmel church, the architect has acknowledged in the first instance the void of landscape or *non-place* which was yet to happen but was being developed alongside and after the arrival of the church in the late 1970s and into the 1980s. And so his abiding imagery is the mosque in the desert. In Firhouse, like in traditional mosque design, the church is

almost mute externally bearing only a cross on its entrance, which announces its religious and community function. Then you move into a different world; inside a walled complex emerges a cruciform church at its centre and four courtyard gardens contained between the external concrete walls and the glazed arms of the Latin cross of the church. The explicit symbolism of the paradise garden and the medieval cloister are evoked and importantly, Meagher's design keeps the scale of the neighbouring ever-sprouting suburban houses. This is a contradictory and largely introverted place where the courts act as complex transitional spaces between the sacred community/city and the profane space of the suburban city beyond. We are reminded of Geary's words from 1974 and the connection between Vincent Scully's lecture and the suburban Dublin church ten years later is complete:

What matters is that we are dealing with complex mysteries, and we must be wary of reducing them to mere problems. The architect's job is to create the correct visual expression of such dualities, and if Venturi is correct he will have many precedents for this in the architecture of the past, and a richer solution will be the result.

Conclusion: celebrity outings

The two case studies of Gropius and French-Mullen House and Scully and Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church are digestible because of the canonical figures at either-end(s) of both narratives. Due to the exclusion of myriad socio-cultural forces at play, the two examples are sustained by a reductive linearity with a starting point (Gropius lecture and International Style, Scully lecture and Venturi) and a final point (Scott and French-Mullen, Meagher and Firhouse). As such, these lecture/influence paradigms are sustained by the cult of personality underpinning modern (since the seventeenth century) architecture.

Again, am I being too obvious to state in conclusion that the canonical figure attracts and that the key to understanding the nature and role of the AAI lecture lies in celebrity culture? Certainly the Association aimed high in its invitations and fiercely maintained a dialogue with significant British figures of architectural culture who repeatedly addressed the AAI during the 1950s and 1960s such as Basil Spence, Ian Nairn, Philip Powell, G. E. Kidder-Smith, Myles Wright, and Kenneth Campbell. And then along came internationally renowned figures like Myron Goldsmith of S.O.M., Denis Crompton of Archigram, James Stirling (twice), Buckminster Fuller, Edgar Tafel, Louis Kahn and on, so that the AAI lecture-list at this mid-twentieth century juncture read like a who's-who in contemporary architecture. It would seem that the Association has always worked hard in pursuing the latest and greatest, as entries in the minute books of 1959 testify:

Alvar Aalto regretted that he could not come to Dublin until the autumn. Mr Cuffe proposed that this opportunity should not be missed and had suggested a "honarium" of £25 plus expenses. Mr Purcell suggested approaching the Arts Council. (9th April 1957)

A letter from Mies Van Der Rohe (sic) thanking the Association for the invitation to lecture but stating that his schedule in London is very tight but if at all possible he would write and let us know if he can come. (20th April 1959)

The visit of the acclaimed architect Eric Mendelsohn occurred during Scott's watch as AAI president in 1937 and can surely be credited as a central source for the design of his house Geragh (1938) and his Shamrock Pavilion (1939), and significantly, also for Desmond Fitzgerald and team's acclaimed Collinstown Airport (1937-41). As discussed though, the presence of an international celebrity was and continues to be something of a reflexive action; of course the accepted invitation means that more architects will be exposed to the maestro but by virtue of being invited, the maestro would have already been on the younger generation's radar. Mendelsohn's lecture and its subsequent reporting in *The Irish Builder* is demonstrative of all of these conditions: the performance experience, the celebrity obsession and the reflexivity of the invitation. As the president of the RIAI thanked Mendelsohn he said,

There were probably many present who considered that architecture in its recent phases tended to an undesirable mechanisation and... it was all to the good that even those who differed in some degree from Mr Mendelsohn's outlook should have the privilege of making direct contact with men who were world famous and learning at first hand their views.

Implicit in these celebrity show-and-tell monologues that are the AAI lectures, is the readiness and hunger of Irish architects to hear about developments abroad. Richard Kearney observes that *'Being surrounded by water has always been viewed in one of two ways: as an insulating device against alien influence or as an open exchange with other peoples and places.'* As the lecture content has increasingly come to imply, Irish architects through the AAI activity reacted against the 'insulating device' in the hope for 'alien influence' and 'open exchange'. However in reality, and according to my oral history research, travel and journal exposure have had infinitely more to do with open exchange and migratory influences than have studio-tuition and RIAI addresses or AAI lectures. Of course there were insular periods, especially during the Second World War when travel was not permitted, but from 1946 onwards all of the significant figures in the post-war history of Irish architecture travelled either for work opportunities (Kevin Roche, Brian Hogan, Sean Rothery), postgraduate studies (Cathal O'Neill, Robin Walker, Andrew Devane, Patrick Quinn, Jim Fehily, Peter Doyle, Noel Dowley) or travel experience (Ronald Tallon, Kevin Fox, Wilfred Cantwell). And curiously, not one of the above architects has cited an AAI lecture as signalling an epiphany or even an inspirational moment.

So however we choose to record the built, critical or simply non reactions of the architectural community to the AAI lectures, we may sum up that by virtue of their unbroken presence in Irish architectural culture throughout the twentieth century (and incidentally, they survived the 'rival' lecture-programme of the Building Centre in the early 1960s), they have presented Irish architecture with an invaluable source of exposure and a consistent social meeting point. In mundane terms they might best be defined as comfortable mid-week evening CPD (continued professional development). In loftier terms they have been the rhetorical site where the emerging generation played out its reactionary tendencies. But one thing is certain, tangible reactions to them are always murky and unclear except perhaps in the instance of tomato-throwing at the pomposity of one of the foreign critics!

Ellen Rowley is an architectural historian based in the School of Histories and Humanities, Trinity College Dublin. She is currently researching a doctorate on the culture of Dublin architecture, 1945 - 1975 through the example of seminal architectural competitions.



Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Courtesy De Blacam and Meagher

Membership Form

Dear Members,

As a voluntary non-profit organisation our dependency on the support of our members is paramount. It is only through the continued involvement of our membership that the AAI can fulfil its charter 'to provide a medium of friendly communication between members and others interested in the progress of architecture'. To this end we look forward to seeing you at AAI events.

Regards,
The Committee

(PLEASE FILL OUT ALL IN BLOCK CAPITALS)

Membership term runs from 01/01/09 to 31/12/09

Name:

Address:

Email:

Nationality:

Membership category: (Please tick one from the list A-H)

Student (school) Year

Membership category/fee structure

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- B** Member (retired or unemployed) €20
- C** Member (student over 2nd Year) €20
- D** Member (student 1st & 2nd Year) Free
- E** Member (honorary) Free

Associate member

- F** Associate member €20
(other than approved organisations*)
- G** Associate Member (single event - non student) €10
- H** Associate Member (single event - student) €10

(*members of ICS, SSI and EEI)

Important Notice Regarding Site Visits: The AAI Insurance Policy covers only paid-up members of the AAI, for instance children are NOT covered. Entrance to site would be refused to non-AAI members. It is also requested that AAI-members visiting sites provide their own safety equipment (minimum safety boots and hard-hat). Entrance to site could be refused for lack of safety equipment.

Payment Details

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In the interest keeping our members up to date with all events, the AAI would like to encourage as many members that have the facility to receive email to kindly fill out the following:

- I would like to be reminded of AAI events by email
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Age Group: 19-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60+

AAI Lectures & Site visits qualify as 'Formal CPD activity' as approved by RIAI council

- Lectures
- AAI Awards
- Site Visits
- Exhibitions
- Building Material
- Social events (tennis tournament etc)

