



NATURAL
ENVIRONMENT
RESEARCH COUNCIL

NO. 2: RESPONSE
& RESPONSIBILITY



The Open University
INTERDEPENDENCE

Thursday February 1st 2007

School of Architecture University of Sheffield ARTS TOWER Meeting Room 14

Interdependence Lab – Workshop for New Researchers 2

ESRC/NERC Interdependence Seminar Series

Studio Six MArch University of Sheffield/Geography, Open University

'The thought experiments we conduct in the great laboratory of the imaginary are also explorations in the realm of good and evil.' (Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*)

The **Interdependence Day project**, (www.interdependenceday.co.uk) launched at the RGS on July 1st 2006, aims to reinvigorate sustainability debates and to question some of the technocratic outcomes of seeing ecological and economic concerns as an accounting or 'problem solving' challenge.

The **Interdependence Lab** forms part of the ESRC/NERC funded Interdependence seminar series of the OU Geography Discipline for researchers and postgraduates of which the first 'Lively Temporalities' (organized by Matthew Kurtz) took place on July 1st 2006. It is hosted by the School of Architecture, University of Sheffield in collaboration with Studio Six of the Masters course in Architecture. Studio Six, guided by Renata Tyszczyk and Florian Kossak have been working with the theme of **Interdependence**: What can architecture contribute to this attempt to reconsider global, economic and environmental issues?

The meeting will be a chance to talk through:

- The ways the process of academic research calls up responses and responsibilities from researchers
- The challenges of working with complex threads of relationality / interconnection / interdependence
- Thinking through the politics of conducting research that makes demands (relating to for example, environment, development, publics, democracy)

The first part of the day will include presentations on the Interdependence day project and an introduction to the work of the Architecture Masters students. The afternoon will be given over to short individual presentations in three smaller groups. Individual presentations should last **no more than 10 minutes** and should outline research and respond to the themes of the seminar listed above. The discussions in the seminars will focus on how the different approaches to research might bind and effect new understandings of interdependence and responsibility. The ambitions of research practices and their ability to engage a broader or different audience will be explored. The final discussion will begin to plan for the next Interdependence day in October 2007.

Participants include: **Open University, Geography**: Joe Smith, Kathryn Yusoff, Matthew Kurtz, Simon Hutta, Shannon Hensley, Elena Vachelli, Angela Last, Uli Beisel, Liza Griffin, A.E. Akinwumi, Chiara Certoma; **University of Sheffield, Architecture**: Renata Tyszczyk, Florian Kossak, Paul Bower, Chris Richmond, Stuart McGrath, Julia Udall, Sarah Hollingworth, Kevin Ryan, Basim Shamsuddin, Chris Patience, Rachel Haynes; **University of Sheffield, Geography**: Tariq Jazeel; **University of Sheffield, Town and Regional Planning**: Margo Huxley

Studio Six, MArch, School of Architecture University of Sheffield

'Global and Local spaces can be separated only as an abstraction, in reality they are intertwined.'

'[...]globality of economy and locality of politics are, in fact, the 'systemic prerequisites' of the new and peculiar, curiously lopsided arrangement of world affairs.'

(Zygmunt Bauman 'The unwinnable war'; 'As seen on TV')

Studio Six has been examining the notion of **Interdependence** in the context of their experiences of three cities (Berlin, Warsaw, Sheffield). Their approach to architecture has been one which 'listens to the claims' of these cities and allows spaces to 'work' (in terms of funding, climate, politics, social and relational dimensions etc.) according to their own dynamics and metabolisms, and at the same time questions some of the assumptions made about the way we understand (and therefore design) cities. It is an approach rooted in creativity and metaphor which concentrates on the potential of a city rather than on imposing marketable criteria of enterprise, lifestyle or efficiency. Our interest has focused on the informal and uncertain nature of these cities and we have been considering architecture in terms of experimental and creative practice (processes, everyday life activities, sustainability, poetic possibilities) and not simply as static objects buildings or products. In addition relationality, networking, contiguity and connectivity (as a way of navigating the 'minefield' that is both global and local) are notions that have started to preoccupy the practice of architecture. The studio asks how they relate to the broader theme of **Interdependence** which stretches existing models of sociability to include the inter-human and the non-human.

The challenge the students have been set is how to translate the needs of diverse users across these cities and the globe into an architectural brief (otherwise known as project or proposal), and which is thought of primarily in terms of creative practice. The briefs are thought experiments that build on existing situations and rely on imaginative and material propositions.

For example, for their architectural 'interventions' some students are researching the Jarmark Europa in Warsaw (one of the largest informal – or illegal – depending which way you look at it – markets in Europe) and the series of negotiations- in terms of legislation, status, political and cultural identity of the 30,000 illegal Vietnamese immigrants who have made their home in and around the market. Others are concentrating on the politics of food and consumption in Sheffield and the inevitable connections down the road and across the globe. Some students are interested in the potential of cultural production – music or circus –and how this engages spatial opportunities in different modes and at different scales in Berlin, Warsaw and Sheffield.

Studio Six will be presenting above all visual material – drawings, films, models – with few words. They have been exploring and instigating alternative modes of architectural representation, communication and media that are more open rather than specialised or expert. Their individual presentations will hopefully allow an opening to discussion in the afternoon group seminars. Each of the students have made a 'declaration of interdependence' in which they have declared an interest-whether in post-industrial landscapes or biodiversity, and from these they have since begun to generate their briefs and other pieces of writing and focus their research. As a preamble to their approach they have questioned and discovered possible 'spaces for deliberation' in the three cities.

Much of the thinking and research for **Studio Six** has been informed by the discussions around the 'Architecture and Indeterminacy' Theory Forum that took place in the School of Architecture, University of Sheffield in November 2006: 'Indeterminacy (in architecture) could be physical, formal, material but also social and political; it could be both theoretical and pragmatic, cognitive and experiential. It investigates those moments when there is a questioning of the disciplinary limits, and of ways of theorising and practicing architecture.'

(http://www.shef.ac.uk/architecture/main/news/nw_ev.shtml)

Renata Tyszcuk 2007

Presentations/Abstracts:

Joe Smith/Kathryn Yusoff (Geography, Open University)

Joe and Kathryn will introduce the thinking behind the Interdependence Day project and some of the themes that have emerged in recent seminars.

Matthew Kurtz (Geography, Open University)

I will use an arctic community documentation project that a home economics professor carried out in 1949 to think a little about the primacy of vision in one of the central concepts we use to talk about interdependence: economies.

Tariq Jazeel (Geography, University of Sheffield)

Awkward Geographies: spatialising academic responsibility

Abstract: In this paper I respond to recent postcolonial geographical scholarship that sets forth transformative agendas in order to create more cosmopolitan theoretical projects within the discipline. For many geographers and other social scientists the challenges they face are not located just within their own disciplinary parameters, but also within those other specific research communities within which their work situates them. This paper explores the tensions between negotiating one's academic voice, position and responsibility within Geography as well as within a specific Area Studies community. In particular, as a UK based geographer who works extensively around issues pertaining to Sri Lanka, I reflect on some of my own fairly unremarkable, yet extremely awkward, encounters during the course of scholarly praxis in Sri Lanka in order to raise questions over the political and theoretical implications of the spatialities of responsibility and engagement in such academic praxis. The paper theorizes the chasm's that open in such awkward encounters between notionally situated 'local' and 'foreign' scholars respectively, and in particular seeks to develop ways of engaging and re-orienting those chasms in ways that might enable the production of theoretically rich, yet richly contextualized postcolonial knowledges committed to the site of one's scholarly praxis, not just to the advancement of a more cosmopolitan theoretical project within a Euro-American academic episteme..

OU Geography Researchers:

Shannon Hensley

My research work addresses rumba music and dance in Havana, Cuba and the ways dance and music practices corporealize difference. I regard rumba events as intensive sites of social relations and highly ordered spatial events from which to question the ongoing re-formation of bodies and spaces. Through ethnographic fieldwork in Havana, Cuba I investigated the re-making of bodily and social space through the encounters taking place within rumba performances sites. I am particularly interested in, to quote Sara Ahmed, 'how the bodily exchange between subjects reopen the histories of encounter that both substantiate and subjugate strange bodies.*' Here the term strange refers to bodies that are re-made to be out of place in face-to-face encounters.

S. Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (London: Routledge, 2000).

Simon Hutta

My research is concerned with the various intersections of the subjective and the spatial within contemporary regimes of power and violence. I want to exemplify my work by drawing on a little study conducted in the context of last year's Equality March for the rights of lesbians, gays and transgenders in Warsaw. The pervasive articulations of tolerance at the march and in its coverage by the media served as a tool to re-invent unity at the European level, going along with a focus on heterosexuality and the virtual absence of drag performances.

Elena Vachelli

My PhD focuses on social movements as part of the urban governance debate where it addresses local practices resulting in social conflicts or in more established forms of political negotiation- such as multiscalar networking. Past and contemporary forms of urban activism carried out by Milan feminist movement in the 1970s and by women's organizations today represent the core research focus of my doctoral research.

Angela Last

My work is about alternative approaches to communicating environmentalism. It is inspired by the many different connections people make and through which they link to the environment. I am trying to discover and work with these connections and engage in a mutual learning process and idea exchange with participants of my projects. These projects are currently art-practice based, but other modes of communication (sensual communication) are also explored.

A.E. Akinwumi

I will be presenting a brief exploratory talk on memorialization, the (un)memorable and the (un)forgettable, looking at the public's interaction with memorialization and 'monumentalization' in post-atrocity societies, particularly those undergoing processes of reconciliation. The empirical focus of the talk is on the South African city of Tshwane (which began its life as the Apartheid stronghold of Pretoria). I hope to present a brief but clear historical background to the city, and proceed to consider the discourse that framed and enabled its renaming as a form of memorialization. I address the influence of globalization in

relation to the constitution of the new social imaginary whilst paving the ground for a critique of simplistic visions of memorialization vis-à-vis overarching issues of subjectivity, identity, participation and the influence of an odious past in the present. Indeed, in a South African sociocultural and political landscape dotted with Afrikaner monuments and memorials - sad reminders of a brutal past, the new post-Apartheid government is inundated with requests mainly from the majority - 'Black' - Other to counterbalance this by creating monuments and memorials which will recognize the history of the city and histories of previously marginalized groups and at the same time promote reconciliation. In these terms, then, I hope to show how on the national level memorialization in South Africa since 1994 could be understood as an important yet problematic index of the globalization of various sociocultural and political norms that now underpin construction of notions of a 'new' South Africa, and its attempts to acknowledge its much maligned Other.

Liza Griffin

My thesis is about the pursuit of 'good governance', democracy and sustainability through institutional reform in North Sea fisheries. In this research, I explored and experimented with innovations in governing fisheries instituted by the EU under the rubric of good governance.

Uli Beisel

designing life? mosquitoes, designer biology & interdependence
Notions of (re)designing nature have become more important in biology since the early 1970s. This is exemplified in recent attempts to create genetically modified mosquitoes in malaria research. Through discussing these developments I will ask how the move towards 'design' in biology and the concept of interdependence relate to each other

Chiara Certoma

A demanding definition of an "adequate environment": places, identities, environmental culture.
The aim of the project is to define what does the concept of an 'adequate environment' for human life mean and what kind of implications follow from its hypothetical assumption as a core concept in environmental culture and to define what philosophical paradigm is at the core of environmental claims.

Sheffield Studio Six MArch students:

Paul Bower – Threads Through Sheffield

Renowned around the world for its industrial heritage in Steel, Sheffield may not be so widely known for its theatrical attributes; yet the city is in fact, home to some of the most contemporary physical theatre groups and human circuses currently working within the UK and Europe.

In the UK there are 3 cities that have influential circus schools located within them; Sheffield, Bristol and London. At present there is no governing body or connecting thread that adjoins these 3 main schools in the UK; forcing them to compete against each other for funding from the same pot of money. (Arts Council and Lottery). As a result physical theatre and human circus within the UK is struggling to sustain it self as funding is drying up year on year with resources being redirected to commitments such as the 2012 Olympic Games in London.

'Threads Through Sheffield' takes the traditional circus that once travelled by train, 'evacuated' urban fields and the current European train/circus network as a way of making the contemporary UK circus mobile and sustainable. Thus connecting existing disjointed schools by rail into an interdependent network, firstly across the UK and then Europe; enabling schools to tour, perform, exchange and educate throughout the circus year.

Chris Richmond

"Sheffield is the most important sub-cultural city in the country" according to 'GO! Sheffield'

Subcultures are progressively exciting thanks to pods of creativity and often spontaneous formalization of action groups. My proposal attempts to bridge contact with people in distant places, forging links and ties in a transitional communal space through a community commodity offering a discussion platform. The broadcasting and media hub will offer an opportunity for positive development as described by the 'New economics foundation.' It will act as a catalyst for communities to express issues and concerns challenging traditional concepts of normality. The process, dialogue and exchange of ideas will be enhanced with a program of cultural interventions bringing together the practice of new media with the ideas and needs of groups and individuals for collective expression.

Stuart McGrath

I am interested in trying to define what a public space is and potentially what it could be. With established public realm in Sheffield so highly controlled that it is arguably private, I will ask whether real public space still exists in the city, and if so, where is it? My research to date has concerned public spaces and any future project may involve a questioning of the legalities of space and ask questions such as: Can space actually be owned? In terms of legal ownership a section of the earth can be bought, sold and possessed. But can a person not stand within that space and feel that they have physical, albeit temporary ownership of it and it's immediate surroundings? There are many architectural manifestations that could determine whether a person can feel they have ownership of a space, such as being external or internal, formal or informal, oppressive or relaxing. My explorations on tables led me to these ideas of the temporary ownership of space, and about how subtle changes in the nature of a place can change perceptions of the ownership of it. Therefore any future project may involve the (legal) temporary ownership, occupation and use of a building or site. It

must question the distinction between public and private and use architectural devices as tools to question or to blur the boundary between the two.

Sarah Hollingworth

Akademia Ruchoma – Mobile Academy – Mobile Akademie

In Warsaw there is a long history of underground education institutions, the *Uniwersytet Latający* (translated as Flying or Floating University) which educated those denied higher education, and/or taught an alternative curriculum.

The proposed *Akademia Ruchoma* would carry on this tradition of alternative adult education, responding to the growing divide in Warsaw between those with many opportunities and those with few. An invisible Warsaw exists – a place of the deprived, unemployed, migrant workers, illegal immigrants and refugees. The *Akademia Ruchoma* would create representation and opportunities through further education, advice and support.

The *Akademia Ruchoma* embraces the real and the imaginary, an education transport interchange where physical and mental migration is encouraged. The project will propose alternative methods of education and knowledge exchange. It will question citizenship and ways of representing the uncertain immigrant. The thesis project will respond to my personal reading of interdependence as a requirement to take responsibility, and respond to the complex interconnectivity of globalisation. The project will be an example of taking responsibility for clandestine and displaced people and will respond to the interconnectivity between local and global; fixed and mobile; permanent and temporary; import and export; social and physical.

Julia Udall

“Community activists and local politicians are often surprised to see their struggles on maps of distant lands, translated into obscure languages...”

The brief for my project will be to develop a library and community forum that is extrovert: (a celebration of tacit knowledge both useful and non-useful), a home for all sorts of 'Live Projects' (interdisciplinary activism) that reaches to other places within the city and other cities throughout the world. Local precedents, (such as the shared resources and physical forms of the distinctive 'Little Mesters' and the new Junior school planned that uses a courtyard arrangement to encourage interaction between various parents) will be combined with a language that may begin to represent the diverse international community of the area.

The forum and a library must be impacted by (and must impact on) key points in Sharrow, such as London Road, (a street where all communities in the area converge), the Lansdowne Estate, (an area where there is some resentment for years of neglect), The Moor (soon to be the site of the relocated Castle Market), The John Street Triangle (home to music and metal). The threshold and the lines outward will be critical.

Kevin Ryan

With the current 'influx' of immigrant labour my brief is to create a hybrid building that will be the 'first point of call' for immigrants to the area – Sheffield. It will implement some aspects of the table I have previously produced: it will be informal space for the transient individual (not institutional respecting the freedom of the users) and it should also be a place of exchange between immigrants and residents. Aim: The aims will be firstly to offer support to immigrants by: providing temporary accommodation and help immigrants to find their own, provide language classes and help to find employment in the city of Sheffield and surrounding areas (many qualified immigrant workers end up working minimum wage jobs

as their English is not acceptable) The aim of the building will not be to set up a ghetto of immigrant workers but to integrate it with the existing residents and restore a sense of community in parts of the city of Sheffield. Site: From the construction of my 'transient poseur table' in which I used recycled materials I wish to apply this in my design to re-use/recycle one of Sheffield's "old/disused" buildings (most of the buildings photographed are ear marked for demolition) not interested in producing a landmark building. I desire to alter a familiar or recognizable building in the city to create new structure to house my design – ideally I want to gain access to the building and deal with something real and tangible for my scheme

Basim Shamsuddin – 'Institute of Food' - A Speculative Brief

The Institute of Food could be a place that unites various disparate issues to do with food; including topics as diverse as education, refuge, aid, gastronomy, nutrition, farming, trade, and research.

The purpose of uniting these different strands, is to highlight Humanities' reliance on food, and bring to the fore that the food we produce comes from an island planet. With the Earth's population set to rise to 10bn by 2050, a food production and perhaps of more importance, a food distribution crisis looms.

The amount of land we have remains constant. The giants of agri-business, and the chemical industries and supermarkets that thrive in unison wish to persuade us that intensive farming is the only way to increase yields and ensure sufficient production, however a growing number are starting to ask what the true costs of such methods are. Our responsibilities extend into the distant future, and to every corner of the globe...

What does it mean for our environment?

What does it mean for our health?

How might future humans look back at this age?

What alternatives exist to feed cities in developed nations?

How can all countries become more self reliant when it comes to food?

The importance of food needs to be taken beyond issues of diet and gastronomy, and seen as part of the same fabric as our natural and built environment, and quite literally the embodiment of what we are.

Rachel Haynes

The history of production economics has looked solely at profit in monetary units, it has ignored the effects of processes on the environment and as a consequence human impact has altered nature permanently. With the effects of pollution becoming increasingly evident on a global scale alternative methods of economic growth must be found. A green economy looks at financial growth that has no negative and potential positive effects on its surroundings and the wider environment.

Warsaw, and particularly the Praga district presents an opportunity to test alternative means of development away from the generic westernisation of many European cities. The two main markets within the area are representative of both its history and future, the 100 year old Różycki Bazaar and Jarmark Europa "Russian" market, once the largest market in Europe. Both of these sites are now under threat of closure from a number of possible developments. None of the development plans look at the possibility of preserving and enhancing these important trading points for the history of the city. This is because they are seen as dangerous places to visit and representative of a negatively viewed Eastern influence.

My project will aim to work alongside this existing market trade structure, providing space for exchange alongside the production of goods to sell at these markets, with the approach of a green economy. It will be at first reliant on the two existing markets and their patterns of use within the area. This aims to bring these into co-operation with each other, and with its local

environment. With future plans in mind it will also become able to disconnect itself from the two market sites in the event of their closure.

Chris Patience

Markets act as the beating heart to our cities. In an age when cities operate on an increasingly global circuit, the market asserts the importance of the local and making people feel connected to one another. They exhibit the very essence of what is urban; community, cooperation, free enterprise and exchange. The project will explore ways to facilitate the overlapping and converging of different types of trade, and in doing so, generate new employment opportunities and cooperative possibilities between different users and locations. New exchange networks, in terms of trade and knowledge, will be instigated, both on a global and local level. Accommodating strangers as commuters can enable the sharing of narratives between different places. The anticipation of new and unpredictable uses over time may facilitate programmatic ambiguity and overlap, which in turn can redefine the marketplace. A framework, derived by disorder, will be able to fracture and restructure according to chance. The scheme will promote evolution rather than erasure. Proposals will not attempt to compete with or replace existing facilities, but instead compliment and enhance what already exists. I will explore the possibilities of a market space that promotes integration in place of exclusivity and accommodates multiple programmes and their intersections, throughout the day and night. It will seek to incorporate not only the fixed market, but also the potential for transient markets with the view to providing short-stay accommodation and other community facilities.