PROMOTING A SENSE OF PLACE
An International Study of Architecture Centres

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Abstract
This paper details an international research project that examined over 50 architecture centres in 23 countries including four case study subjects:
• Kent Architecture Centre, England
• Chicago Architecture Foundation
• Museum of Finnish Architecture
• Netherlands Architecture Institute

The paper analyses the projects’ main findings including issues of definition, reasons for foundation, cultural policy impact and the main goals of architecture centres. It summarizes recommendations for centres as they attempt to reach their aims.

Keywords: Architecture centres; cultural policy.

INTRODUCTION
In September 2004, Northern Ireland’s first architecture centre, PLACE opened in Belfast. The research presented here aimed to support PLACE and other architecture centres, particularly those in the first years of work. Because little previous scholarship on architecture centres existed, the project examined the history and wider contexts in which centres work as well as asking key research questions: what are the goals of architecture centres and how can centres best reach those aspirations? As the research progressed, these areas of analysis expanded to include issues of definition, the influence of Jürgen Habermas’s theories of debate and exchange, the impact of policy, and notions of cultural capital as posited by Pierre Bourdieu.

While investigating these specific research questions, a significant aim of the research was to incorporate methods of data collection and analysis not historically, (though increasingly), utilized within the realm of architectural research. To that end, the project has employed sociologically-based grounded theory and qualitative data analysis through survey and interview with surveys from over 50 centres in 23 countries and four case study subjects:
• Kent Architecture Centre, England
• Chicago Architecture Foundation
• Museum of Finnish Architecture, Helsinki
• Netherlands Architecture Institute, Rotterdam.

The findings of the study were then disseminated to PLACE, the UK Architecture Centre Network and the Netherlands Architecture Institute as a means for them to reflect on their methods of working and wider contextual issues which impact upon them. The project generated
several areas for future research including investigation of issues pertinent to architecture centres and their supporters and to a wider research community -- in architecture, cultural policy and tourism studies -- as well.

This paper seeks to encapsulate the project, beginning with a review of the research methods employed. It then goes on to summarize the main findings of the project -- issues of definition, reasons for foundation, policy impact and the goals of architecture centres. The paper then briefly summarizes recommendations for centres as they attempt to reach their goals. Throughout the research and this paper, the authors questioned basic assumptions of architecture centres -- that individuals can impact on their built environments and that debate and discussion can contribute to democratic change. Though the research is largely predicated on these concepts, it also interrogates them as it progresses.

**METHOD**

To begin, we will discuss the various methods employed in the gathering and analysis of data, both as a means to add to the debate of the identity of architectural research as well as to offer these particular methods to scrutiny within architectural research framework. Much critical discussion revolves around the quality of architectural research and its ability to be evaluated in terms similar to those of other areas of academic endeavour.

Wang argues that social science methodological frameworks might be an avenue for architectural research to pursue more frequently in order to improve its esteem within the larger research environment:

> “Architectural research can benefit from [an] acceptance of a diversity of methods that nevertheless offers a developed sense of each method’s strengths and weaknesses. ...[T]he social science domain offers an extensive literature arranging these methodologies into systemic frameworks that are both comprehensive as well as definitive of quality” (Wang, 2003, p. 50).

This research sought to use qualitative data analysis including “a defined set of research tactics…survey, interview, ethnographic engagement, document assessment, graphic exercise, statistical analysis...” (Wang, 2003, p. 50). We did this in order to produce research “from the totality of the data generated ...[which could give] a sense of systemic robustness in addressing the object of inquiry.” (Wang, 2003, p. 50) In using qualitative analysis of surveys and case studies, including textual analysis of multiple interviews, the main research methodology followed the framework of grounded theory. In so doing, however, the research acknowledged the significant debate around grounded theory’s ontological and epistemological foundations that has emerged since its inception in 1967 in sociology (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, Wilson and Hutchison, 1996, Dey, 1999).

**Techniques of Research – Survey, Multi-site Case Study and Interview**

After an initial literature review revealed that little research had been completed about the specifics of architecture centres, it became clear that a preliminary survey of existing centres would be necessary. The survey, of which fifty were returned from eighteen countries (forty-eight per cent return rate), assisted in gaining a basic understanding of the architecture centre 'phenomenon' and in the selection of case study sites. The cross-sectional surveys of issues including history and definition as well as goals and audiences allowed analysis of many participants at one point in time, ideal to the preliminary investigation required of this survey.

The results of the survey, (of which the scope of this paper does not allow detailed examination), showed that the typology of centre was extremely disparate, and we determined the need for in-depth study of case study sites. The second phase of the data gathering process thus focused on the design of case study protocols; within architectural research, the case study is an increasingly acknowledged methodology (Johansson, 2003). Case studies were particularly
useful in the understanding of organizations such as architecture centres as they explore “complex social phenomena” to “retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events, such as...organizational and managerial processes.” (Yin, 2003, p. 2) In addition to conducting interviews at each of the four sites, key documents were collected including annual reports, budgets, exhibition catalogues, commissioned research, etc.

Unlike Yin who suggests that each ‘case must be carefully selected so that it either (a) predicts similar results (a literal replication) or (b) predicts contrasting results but for predictable reasons (a theoretical replication),[emphasis in text]’ (2003, p. 47), this study agrees with Johanssen -- site selection can be 'selected purposefully or analytically, because it is information-rich, critical, revelatory, unique or extreme (as opposed to a representational sample strategy used in statistical investigation.)' (Johansson, 2003). The analysis of the case studies was hypotheses generating (Johansson, 2003) in the grounded theory model. By using four sites, the data and its analysis were enriched -- the themes which emerged from a case study not only informed data collection in the parallel case, but also the analysis of data across all four sites led to the exposure of shared themes which could be compared across the four samples.

The results from the survey revealed that four categories would best help to further explore the typology of architecture centre. These main operational criteria for selection for the four case study sites were identified as a comparison of:

- physical makeup – numbers of staff, size of facility, etc.;
- funding and support structures, including relationship to government;
- means of assessment of goals and
- wide array of cultural context in which centre sits.

The four case study sites were then selected because they represented a varied sample across that range of criteria. The centres chosen also represented a wide array of ages, from 11-50 years and equally divergent reasons for foundation.

**Table 1.** Four case study sites selected for examination (Source: Authors).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centre Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kent Architecture Centre (KAC), England</td>
<td>outreach-based, no public facilities, one of UK’s oldest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago Architecture Foundation (CAF), USA</td>
<td>little government financial support, highly dependent on tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museum of Finnish Architecture (MFA), Helsinki, Finland</td>
<td>one of oldest centres, museum identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Architecture Institute (NAi), Rotterdam, Netherlands</td>
<td>purpose-built building, large staff numbers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Procedure of Analysis**

The information collected, the three-part process of qualitative data analysis began with the collation of surveys and transcription of the interviews; these greatly enhanced the ability to comprehensively describe the data. The examination was further assisted by involving subjects from various sectors in the research -- not only centre staff, but their financial supporters, volunteers, board members, and users. The decontextualization analysis process followed the advice of Coffey and Atkinson developed from Tesch (1996, p. 31) with a recombination of concepts as far as possible. The classification process, which involved multiple passes, not only categorized and indicated negative or aberrant data, but also established relationships and boundaries between the groups. In each case, an element for investigation was identified; the survey data was tallied and every interview analysed for any elements, which pertained to that
topic. Any supporting documents, which centres had provided, were also examined. Depending on the depth of data, this distillation process took between two and four ‘passes.’ This three-step procedure was repeated for every subject analysed – all survey data and interviews were examined as whole documents afresh each time. The categories were then reduced to approximately five-ten major themes for each subject. Each section involved the identification of both formal and substantive type categories, and these connections are seen throughout the text.

The research period and scope did have its limits– most of the data were gathered from Europe and North America. However, the methods employed did allow for substantive recommendations to be made, and employing grounded theory permitted an in-depth interrogation of a topic lacking in previous research.

**ISSUES OF DEFINITION AND QUESTIONS OF A NEW TYPOLOGY**

One of the most persistent questions in the project was ‘is there a standard definition of architecture centre?’ and one of the main findings of the research was that a codified identity of ‘architecture centre’ does not exist. Organisations which define themselves with this nomenclature differ in size, funding structures, personnel. Though many centres have libraries, exhibition spaces, classrooms and bookstores, some are solely outreach-based. Luxton, the National Coordinator of the Architecture Centre Network UK at the time of the publication of *International Architecture Centres* in 2003, (discussed later in this text), asserted all architecture centres share ‘an unshakeable belief in a common set of values that enable people to understand and influence development of their “place”’ (2003, p. 7). Luxton was working in the milieu of the UK and under the aegis of specific funding bodies; the research interrogated not only multivalent definitions found in the data but also whether or not this is a belief held by all centres. In parallel with this key challenge of definition has been the attempt to ascertain if, in the architecture centre, there is a recognizable new typology. We sought to understand if the architecture centre differ substantially from previous organizational typologies to truly engender a ‘movement’ as Ford and Sawyers’ book suggests.

**Genealogical Background**

There is extensive scholarship on the architectural museum, from Poulot’s description of the birth of the museum of architecture in France during the Revolution to Vidler’s influential text, *The Writing of the Walls*, and the work of architectural historians Searing, Colomina, Summerson, Furján, among others. For these scholars, the architectural museum was founded for a variety of purposes – political representation and public instruction and for education of architects and the workers who built their designs. Several authors have written about Patrick Geddes’s 1892 Outlook Tower in Edinburgh, including his biographer Boardman, urbanist Boyer, landscape Alessandra Ponte; architectural journalist Dyckhoff identifies the tower as ‘the’ progenitor architecture centre due to its exhibition which demanded audiences engage with varying scales of the city. There was some literature on individual centres, particularly the Centre for Canadian Architecture. However, little literature examined the centre as a unique typology.

Ford and Sawyers’s book, *International Architecture Centres* of 2003 thus acted as a significant window into the type. It was the first time architecture centres were identified as a 'movement'. The book was funded, in part, by UK government bodies such as the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). It represents an important, though uncritical document; it attempts to brand the notion of architecture centre in an effort to codify a group of organizations with common purpose. The book is not an analysis of centres, but rather a polemical assertion of architecture centres' value, particularly to their funders.

**Reasons for Foundation**

With this lack of previous critical research in mind, the project sought to explore the circumstances that have promoted the development of the centre as a type of cultural organization. These contexts varied, from the influence of environmental awareness and
architectural psychology beginning in the 1960s, to fragmentation of power structures and the erosion of distinctions between high and low culture. Concomitant with this post-modern fragmentation is the development of the term 'culture'; post-Williams, (1958) the term increasingly came to encompass a wide array of behaviours, traditions and organizations. The foundation of many centres in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when postmodernism’s characteristics were being codified and architecture was becoming increasingly recognized as an element of 'culture' in arts policies, can be further identified as part of this phenomenon.

One cannot ignore the significant impact of Habermas's *Transformations of the Public Sphere* of 1962 on what David Hesmondhalgh calls the 'liberal-pluralist view' in which 'participating citizens should be given the tools to make rational decisions about the proper functioning of democratic institutions' (Hesmondhalgh, 2002, p. 30). The belief that inclusive debate and exchange can effect real change in the built environment stemming from Habermas and developed by Fraser (1992) and Calhoun (1992), can be found in the aims and objectives of most centres surveyed. Demands by many centres' funders, especially arts councils, for inclusion of a variety of audiences is a reflection of a late-Habermasian understanding that all communities should have the opportunity to comment on and impact their built environments.

Analysis of the data also revealed other motivations including nationalist desires to promulgate the singularity of national architectures beyond fixed borders; this was particularly the case for centres with major collections, such as the MFA and NAI. In addition, many centres were opened as a greater attention was paid to the links between arts and tourism after Myerscough's publication of his seminal volume *The Economic Importance of the Arts in Britain* in 1988. Though Myerscough touches on architecture only lightly, it was through this volume that the economic importance of culture and its producers was highlighted to policy makers and funders of centres. These centres were founded to make use of architecture as a cultural industry – that is, to develop not only better quality environments, but to use architectural culture as a means to attract investment and residents in line with Florida’s much-criticised arguments about the creative class. Likewise, government preference for policies which encouraged 'upskilling' had an impact on the foundation of centres in England from the mid-1990s until the economic downturn circa 2008.

With these findings, we began to theorise that while a single definition of architecture centre does not exist, the data did reveal that centres seem to be evolving, perhaps unknowingly, towards a common typology. This evolution can be seen in three avenues in both survey and case study data:

- A moving away from a concentration on historic subjects to those which have current impact on the built environment;
- A shift in publics and
- A move towards programming which is interactive in nature rather than passive and uni-directional.

These leanings were a reflection of global awareness of activity in which other like organizations are engaged through ever-increasing communication networks, ease of travel, the popularity of conferences of groups such as the International Conference of Architectural Museums (ICAM), Governance, Architecture, Urbanism: a Democratic Interaction (GAUDI,) the UK’s Architecture Centre Network, Architecture and Design Education Network (ADEN) and Association of Architectural Organizations (AAO.)

Likewise, the data suggest that architecture centres were increasingly concentrating on the process of architecture rather than simply on its product including the ability of those with little Bourdieuan cultural, or indeed financial, capital to impact decisions made about local built environments. This exploration of the process sets architecture centres apart from many cultural organizations.
Policy Impact
Cultural planning impact

As part of the dissection typology, definition and goal formation, the research interrogated the variety and impact of policies upon centres. With such a wide array of cultural, political and economic contexts, this was unsurprisingly difficult. Nonetheless, several patterns emerged from the data. Several centres are based on what might be seen as more 'traditional' cultural policies, that is, those policies dedicated to encouraging, preserving and displaying culture in the mode of an art gallery. Centres with collections, mainly those founded before 1990, fall into this category: MFA, NAi, Alvar Aalto Foundation, the Danish Architecture Centre, Department of Architecture and Design at the Art Institute Chicago, the Norwegian Museum for Art, Architecture and Design, the Irish Architectural Archive and the Swedish Museum of Architecture.

However, it is also clear that later developments in cultural policy also have a considerable impact on centres. In the past twenty years, there has been an explosion in the area of urban redevelopment projects that use 'culture' as the linchpin for their regenerative proposals and policies. This trend of 'cultural planning' has emerged to be one of the most significant cultural policy initiatives of the last two decades. (Stevenson, 2004, p. 119), and architecture centres are certainly part of this trend. Both the NAi and the Lighthouse were parts of larger cultural schemes to rejuvenate 'second' cities -- Rotterdam and Glasgow respectively. These centres were valued by politicians and policy makers both as cultural organizations, and what Bell and Jayne (2003) would call 'flagship buildings' -- projects (after the perceived success of Guggenheim Bilbao,) commissioned as central to urban regeneration projects.

CAF's reputation as an architectural tour company has been a major contributor to city and state governments to vigorously pursue architecture as a major element of the cultural planning of the area. The only government grants CAF receives are for the development of stronger ties to tourism. In 2006, CAF was asked to begin a feasibility study to examine the possibility of a major, high profile new centre to act as a focus for these tourism efforts by the city and state. Though cultural planning regarding architecture appears to be slower to gain popularity by policy makers in Finland, MFA is one of over 100 organizations participating in a growing scheme begun in 2005 for the Design District precinct in Helsinki. Marketed as a quarter of the city as well as a 'state of mind,' the District represents itself in its promotional materials as an area of 'creativity, uniqueness, experiences, design and Finnish city culture.' The creation of this district can be seen as an obvious attempt to increase consumption of local design culture or as an instrument to set Helsinki apart from other cities in Europe.

KAC, with a lack of publicly-accessible space was not part of this type of direct cultural planning in the same way. However, KAC was seen by its funders as part of a means of delivering better quality design to an area under serious development pressure. For SEEDA, formerly one of KAC’s main funders, KAC was a key piece of infrastructure helping to deliver their adoption of Florida's ideas of the creative class. Indeed, many centres in the UK have similar relationships to the issues of creative industries and cultural planning. Urban Vision North Staffordshire was founded as part of an effort to increase the region's competitiveness, while the Doncaster Design Centre, created by a town renaissance initiative, sought to use architecture as a creative industry within a regeneration scheme.

Stevenson argues that cultural planning does not simply seek to produce or deliver art or culture, rather it is a widely-adopted 'stratagem for achieving social inclusion and nurturing local citizenship' (Stevenson, 2004, p. 119). This 'inclusion' aspect of cultural planning, currently hotly debated in arts delivery, is also evident in architecture centres. The Dutch government is increasingly concerned with inclusivity issues; NAi was been asked to provide programming for Rotterdam's large immigrant communities. MFA is required to include architecture from its various communities, to ensure these exhibitions are seen, as much as possible, throughout the country. Many UK centres are heavily encouraged to address diversity by funders, particularly local and regional arts councils. For CAF, inclusivity issues are largely self-generated – that is,
CAF pursues philanthropic grants to encourage a larger demographic. Nonetheless, they are encouraged to do so as part of the policy of these grant-making bodies.

**Architecture policies**

Many nations, particularly those in Europe, have or are planning official government architecture policies. Some of the earliest of these include those of the Netherlands, 1991 and Norway, 1995, and architecture policies are active at supranational levels as well.

The survey data showed that correct knowledge of pertinent architecture policies was not above fifty-five per cent among centres in the study. However, forty-two per cent of centres were contractually responsible for delivery of their national or local architecture policy. The most explicit of these was the relationship between now-dissolved Lighthouse Glasgow and the Scottish Executive's Architecture Policy and Architecture Unit, but this relationship proved to be an exception in the data set.

Many interviewees were cautious about the impact the architecture policy had had on their activity. One might have expected architecture policies to have made a large impact on NAi or MFA as they received 100% core funds from their governments. However, neither centre had experienced any change in what they were expected to deliver after their countries had adopted architecture policies. Though MFA is mentioned in the policy as an important player in architecture culture in Finland, it is not listed as a means of implementation for the policy in the same document. Most importantly for interviewees, architecture policies do not seem to have made any funding impact. Hence a deeper investigation of the qualitative data to reveal that architecture policies have little impact on the goals or programming of centres.

**GOALS**

Having detailed these findings about centres' contextual issues, we will now discuss our findings which answered the basic research question: what are the goals of architecture centres, both individually and as a possible unifying typology? Fundamentally, the data revealed that architecture centres derive much of their raisons d'être from the modernist, positivist environment encouraged by Habermas who contends that 'public sphere of civil society stood or fell with the principle of universal access' (1989, p. 85).

When examining the data, it becomes apparent that the missions of centres tend to fall into three categories; many centres have more than one of these as their main objectives:

- To raise awareness about architecture/built environment issues;
- To increase debate and exchange of ideas about architecture/built environment and
- To improve the quality of design.

The predominant goal type, to raise awareness about architecture and/or the built environment bridges many different types of centres – those with collections, those with tourism as a major focus, and those that work predominantly through outreach.

For NAi, MFA and several other centres including the Danish Architecture Centre, the export of architecture emerging from their respective countries was a chief goal. MFA's export began upon their foundation in 1956 as a means of exerting Finnish national identity early in its existence as a sovereign nation. For other centres, such as NAi, exhibitions of local architecture were exported in order to attract foreign investment and tourism. The collections-based centres included the collection and display of their collections as major goals. However, it is important to note that these centres did not list collection as a singular aim. MFA and NAi both list the 'dissemination of all architecture' or issues which concern 'the making of human space.’ This applied to the Alvar Aalto Foundation, Estonian Museum of Architecture, Lithuanian Museum of Architecture.

For CAF and KAC, aspiring to be an impartial forum for discourse emerged as another important goal, though not explicitly stated. Both organizations believe strongly that this 'not
taking a stance’ position was key to their identity amongst other cultural organizations. For KAC, it was fundamental to their ability to retain a major contract to deliver the Southeast Regional Design Panel, while for CAF, acting as a forum for discussion and exchange enabled them to promote themselves as a “hive” for architectural debate in Chicago.

The Problems with Poor Goal Planning

However, several significant problems with goals and their review also arose throughout the data. These included centres having no goals; objectives not understood by all staff; goals with varying priority amongst staff; and different aims disseminated to the public. The detail of short-term goals, which could be seen as strategies or requisite work in order to achieve larger aims, became mixed with the overall objectives for the organization. At the time of investigation, very few of the centres had long-term plans for three, five or ten years including how goals may change over time.

The reasons for this lack of consideration of goals were difficult to pinpoint, but may be those shared by many not-for-profit cultural organizations. For some centres, management systems and even physical accommodation encourage ‘silos’, separations of departments. Workload and lack of time are repeatedly pointed to by centres themselves; as busy, often underfunded environments, centres did not lend themselves well to this type of close evaluation of overall goals. Also, one cannot ignore the historic lack of evaluation in cultural organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CENTRES

With the issues of policy, conceptual context and goals in mind, the project then set out to recommend how centres could better reach their goals. We will close the paper with a summary of these suggestions in the following themes:

- Increase self-awareness across all tiers of the organization;
- Integrate audiences, staff and subject matter;
- Approach programming and management in active interfaces and
- Identify methods and means appropriate and specific to purpose.

While many suggestions which we might also posit -- such as a better use of evaluation, review of goals and better understandings of audiences -- apply to many cultural organizations, we have purposefully summarized those which are specific to architecture centres.

Self-awareness

The project illuminated the difficulties of identifying a new or evolving typology of architecture centre. An agreed and explicit definition not exist; likewise, centres seem to share very little in terms of management systems, styles of working, audiences, etc.

Centres at every level thus required a far deeper self-awareness, including reflection on this issue of a codified typology. Centres do not, in many cases, seem to understand the larger context in which they work, particularly their policy landscape. There are serious pressures, specific to architecture centres as an emerging typology, which require attention as a matter of urgency, both on strategic or tactical levels, including:

- cultural planning;
- increasing commodification of architecture, (particularly through architourism);
- near-fetishization of the ‘stararchitect’;
- deferent attitude of some governments to cater to the ‘creative class’,
- tendency of supporters towards project-based funding and
- new interests in issues of the built environment due to concerns about climate change or global security threats.
In addition to this, some centres ignore or even disparage their real cultural capital. Centres in cities or regions with little high-profile contemporary or historic architecture often disregard the value of the built environment in which they work. A lack of ‘starchitecture’ – past or present – does not eliminate the ability for local architecture to illustrate issues and problems for discussion with their audiences. Indeed, it may be that the examination of the less spectacular, problematic aspects of local built environment would elicit greater response and engagement.

**Scrutinize the Influence of Architects**

The next area of criticism is carefully levelled by the authors of the research as professional architects themselves. Architects are not only key audience members, but act as directors, chairs of boards, funders, staff members, volunteers, cheerleaders and members. These positions are also occupied by educators, curators, ‘professional’ not-for-profit managers, etc. of course; the involvement of the architect is nonetheless highly influential.

Staff, board members or volunteers trained as architects bring with them not only particular priorities, but also means of working and occupational traditions. Clearly many of the attributes of architects are strongly positive – creativity, the skill to quickly analyse a complex situation, the ability to juggle many requirements at once and to do all of this under extreme pressure.

However, the profession carries with it some inherent characteristics as well, which may exacerbate the problems inherent in any not-for-profit organization. The schooling and subsequent practice of architecture encourages unrealistic working hours, and it may be architecture centres employ similar unsustainable styles of working. Though many traditional contracts include a stage for review of the performance of a building post-occupancy, few architecture firms ever participate in such a review. It may be that architecture centres’ lack of evaluation is impacted by this habit from the profession. Similarly, the lack of long-term (five-ten year) plans seen in centres is not uncommon to architecture firms; extensive strategies for the direction of the firm are not generally part of the training or information used by staff in non-management positions.

Also, architects are not necessarily keen to “recycle” designs used before, a sign of imaginative, but perhaps not the most efficient means of resourcing. Similarly, centres, with some exceptions, seem detached from the notion of recycling programming – not only do centres tend towards designing wholly new programmes, (again, the effect of creative staff seeking new challenges,) but departments within centres, because of a lack of clear lines of communication and an overseeing ‘eye’, duplicate efforts.

Perhaps most potentially damaging is the risk that centres inundated by those already in possession of cultural capital as it relates to the built environment may not be those most capable to act as translators to audiences without similar levels of training. Simply understanding the processes and products of the built environment is not sufficient qualification for running a cultural organisation that seeks to promote and ‘curate’ the public’s interaction with the built environment.

**Integration**

Habermas and his critics, especially those with an eye to post-modern concerns of identity and the emergence of varied discourse, warn of the problems of ‘administration’ – that is, the imposition of priorities, opinions, and world views. This is particularly problematic for centres as administration often seems to lead staff segregating their audiences in fear that practicing architects need different programming to that of the ‘general public’. Particularly if one considers constrained budgets, using audiences to educate one another seems a key tactic to engaging more individuals in built environment issues.

The ‘places’ of mixing can, of course, be virtual and thus occur at any time on a global scale. The coffeehouses of Habermas need not be a literal translation for the need of an actual room in the age of digital global communication. On the other hand, in order to facilitate this type
of integration, centres with public faces must also carefully consider the types of spaces for exchange.

**Active interfaces**

Alongside this, the programming observed at centres which seems to best forward goals of increased engagement with an eye to improving the built environment was, invariably, that which involved audiences coming in contact with buildings and spaces. Much current debate and literature exists around how architecture can or should be exhibited. This research showed time and again that the difficulty of translating architecture into exhibitions, due to the previous training and knowledge needed to understand architectural drawings and even models, was a concern for staff and for their audiences. It was noticeable that the treatment of architecture and built space as sanctified art objects with poorly-designed or ill-considered exhibitions made the issues more inaccessible, particularly to those with little experience in the area. Any programming based around the gallery must much more seriously engage with creative solution to the issue of translation.

Indeed, the data point to interactive and dialogic programming as that which was most engaging and likely to contribute to centres’ goals. The best examples of this were small group tours through buildings and public spaces which invited not only a first-hand experience of the built environment but also conversation for multiple publics with varying understanding of how architecture is made.

**Specificity and Appropriateness**

Finally, we found that centres could better acknowledge their singularity as a type of organization with a specific topic and goals peculiar to themselves. Rather than blindly emulating the methods employed by other educational or cultural organizations, centres could recognize that their goals are specific, requiring rigorous examination of their programming. Though centres clearly have a genealogical relationship to art museums, their mechanisms for delivery are not necessarily appropriate for centres. It may be that debate and exchange are not only means to better achieve goals, but could be the single most exciting and unique aspect to what centres offer.

**CONCLUSIONS**

There are numerous areas into which this research could develop: further in-depth studies into the history and development patterns of centres since 1950; the relationship of centres to architourism; the position of architecture centres in the formation of national cultural identity and the role of centres as part of what Zukin (1990, 1991) and Harvey (1989) refer to as ‘circuits of cultural capital.’ These historical and theoretical issues could be joined by research into more quotidian, but nonetheless critical factors for centres achieving their goals including the best means of translation of architectural product and process as well as identification of possible measures of effectiveness, an area in which many, if not most, cultural organizations struggle.

Perhaps one of the most pertinent areas for future research, however, is the necessary unpacking of the relationship of architecture centres as cultural planning. Criticism has been heavily levelled at national governments around the world for embracing cultural planning, particularly, as Stevenson highlights, it has ‘not been scrutinized as the basis for local government strategic planning’ (Stevenson, 2004, p. 119). Stevenson goes further to make a case that by using cultural planning for ‘civilising’, the process becomes ‘not dynamic, flexible and situational, but linear and linked to a set of clearly defined political and governmental objectives’ (Stevenson, 2004, p.124). Likewise, Hesmondalgh and Pratt (2005) argue that cultural policy in general has not matured at local levels. A criticality of cultural planning as not yet permeated into the discourse of architecture centres. Perhaps this research can help centres scrutinize if being ‘used’ as a mechanism for cultural planning aligns with their goals or future ambitions.

One of the main sources of division between the camps of grounded theory is the issue of verification: ‘Glaser argues, the task of grounded theory is to generate hypotheses, not to test
them… he claims that verification is irrelevant precisely because ideas are induced from the data' (Dey, 1999, p. 20). For Glaser, a second type of work is necessary after theories have arisen in grounded theory analysis, that is, verification studies. The study analysed here has generated hypotheses about the background, context and possible future for centres; now is the time for verification, interrogation and critique of these ideas to begin.

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