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Constructing a Position - Prototype and Manifesto

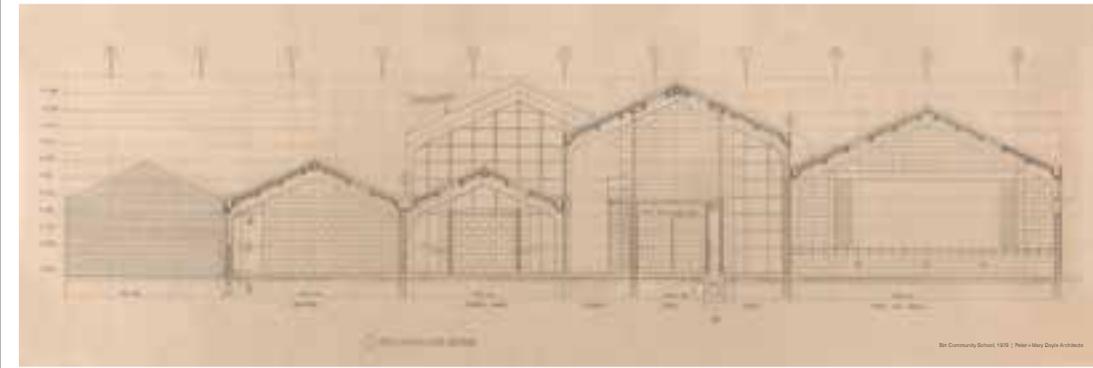
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Construction of a Position. Prototype and Manifesto

At the CA2RE Conference in Ghent in 2017 I presented a paper titled PhD by Prior Published Work – A Case for Appropriation, outlining a PhD that would develop a position between the conservative attitude to research that values explicit knowledge, and the liberal one where researchers reflect on the tacit knowledge embodied in their work. I described this intermediate or hybrid position as an integrated paradigm where the constructed work and the written words act together as a “Dialectical Critical Practice” (Fraser: 2013) in which design is a carrier of knowledge.

At the CA2RE Conference in Ljubljana in 2017 I situated these works within the wider discourse on architecture in Ireland since the 1980s. At the CA2RE conference in Aarhus in 2018 I looked at a house that I designed and built for myself and my family, and the relation that this design has to my education and training. I particularly examined the material quality of this house in relation to the work of my peers and the desire for lightness in my own design process. This quality is expressed and realised through the construction of the projects.

In the next stage of development I will delve into the construction details of a number of projects that I have designed to examine the links between the making of space and the manifestation of ideas in architecture. This exploration will seek to link levels of architectural knowledge across the projects through examination of their agendas and operations. In doing this it will oscillate between the level of explicit knowledge articulated in writings and an exploration of the tacit knowledge embodied at the level of making that satisfies pragmatic and regulatory requirements. These architectural details are considered as prototypes to embody design intentions that propagate across the project as variations on the intended themes of structure, framing, veil, surface, solidity, mobility, ephemerality and nomadism. By bringing this proposal to CA2RE Berlin I hope to continue the process of peer-review that began in Ghent and to help to sharpen the quality of the emerging doctorate. It is intended that the subsequent stages of the PhD would be presented at the following CA2RE conferences in Lisbon, Ghent and Glasgow, as the research develops, in a manner similar to the PRS.

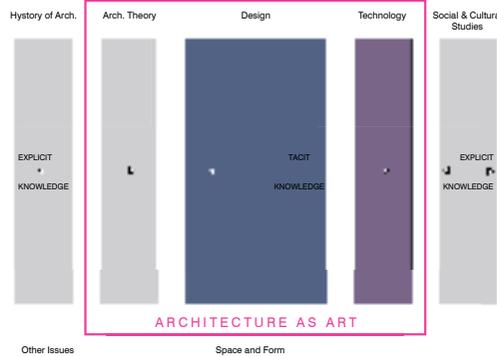


CONSTRUCTING A POSITION

At the CA2RE Conference in Ghent in 2017 I presented a paper titled PhD by Prior Published Work – A Case for Appropriation, outlining a PhD that would develop a position between the conservative attitude to research that values explicit knowledge, and the liberal one where researchers reflect on the tacit knowledge embodied in their work. In the paper I referenced an essay by Julia Williams Robinson titled *The Discipline of Architecture* where she teases out the tensions between these two different conceptions of knowing, positing an “Integrated Paradigm” where the two approaches would be synthesised to their mutual benefit. She argued for an approach that was more grounded in the social and technical realities in which it operates citing the infamous destruction of the Pruitt-Igoe social housing project in St Louis, Missouri in 1972 –

“The critical questions that Pruitt-Igoe raised about the discipline of architecture could have served to expand its boundaries to include the social, economic, and political issue of understanding the needs of the poor. Instead, the discipline’s boundaries remain the same, with such problems defined as outside its primary domain.”

While more recent theorists have moved towards a social theory of architecture, this movement has generally been at the expense of the technical expertise through which the profession of architecture gains its legitimacy. This paper will draw on the work of Bruno Latour to construct an alternative approach where the social agency of architecture is developed through technology and construction.



PROTOTYPE AND MANIFESTO

In the course of researching a history of modernity in Ireland I studied the technical details of projects over a century of modernisation.

One of the conclusions reached was that the construction detail was an essential component of different statements of modernity at different points in history. Many projects made details as prototypes – bespoke responses to performative aspects of the project that explicitly manifest the social and artistic intentions. This is consistent with the practice in philosophy of appropriating the language of construction to express abstract ideas, and it points to a different way of conceiving the architectural detail – not as a linguistic trope – but as the manifestation of a social intention. This reading of technology links construction to wider projects and practices and offers a principle to follow in the expression of architectural design.

Keywords – Architectural detail; Tacit knowledge; Theoretical Position; Explicit Knowledge; Integrated Paradigm.

Revised Disciplinary Diagram
 After Julia Robinson + Bruno Latour

