

Friday, 15 June
9.00-11.45

Track: Mediations
Room: *National Library, Cupola Hall*

THE FOUNDATIONS OF ARCHITECTURAL RESEARCH

Session chairs: Barbara Penner, University College London
Charles Rice, University of Technology Sydney

In the last two decades, architectural historians have increasingly explored how a broad range of 'actors' produce buildings and cities and how architecture operates within a complex web of specific social and material relations. These studies have been important in terms of recognizing how governmental, regulatory and commercial contexts impact upon architectural and urban agendas and outcomes. Yet the formation of the very ground upon which architectural research has been constructed and the ways in which it is framed remains understudied. As Arindam Dutta reminds us in *A Second Modernism* (2013), knowledge paradigms are not essential or self-contained, but emerge from 'a hybridized system involving the infrastructural or regional contexts in which they are set – the availability of funds, of people, epistemic currents, disciplinary audience, and so on.'

This session will aim to deepen understanding of architectural research by focusing on the role of its funding through foundations, think tanks, nongovernmental and governmental organizations. Indeed, in the postwar period, some of the most influential research in architecture and urbanism was funded by such bodies, from the Ford Foundation's funding of Kevin Lynch's and Marshall McLuhan's research to the Rockefeller Foundation's funding of Jane Jacobs'. Meanwhile, key networking opportunities were provided at the International Design Conference at Aspen (an offshoot of the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies think tank) and the Delos meetings. Architectural and urban issues have also been pursued through large government-funded research projects in other fields, including in defense, information technology, sustainability and climate science.

With some notable exceptions, however, few scholars have studied how funding organisations have influenced and shaped research in urban development, planning and housing policy or specific architectural projects. Yet these organisations each have their own histories and agendas, which direct them to focus architectural research in certain ways, and which merit analysis in their own right. This session thus invites papers that will explore the funding of architectural research through specific case studies that illuminate these relationships. We would particularly welcome paper proposals which engage with the wider geopolitical context and the ideological agendas of funding.

PAPERS:

Research as Persuasion: Architectural Research in the Tennessee Valley Authority
Avigail Sachs, University of Tennessee

In 1933, the American federal government created the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and gave it responsibility for the entire Tennessee watershed. The Authority was specifically charged with building a series of dams, (to enhance navigation and produce low cost energy,) but also saw itself as an agent of modernization and reform in a 'depressed' region. To this end the TVA Board of Directors developed the notion of 'decentralized planning', a practice which would balance between the systematic federal approach and local interests and needs. This overarching agenda was obvious in all of the TVA efforts, but especially in its deep investment in research. Spanning multiple disciplines and professions, this research was intended not only to produce new knowledge but also to demonstrate the power of science and planning to the residents of the Tennessee valley and to persuade them to support and contribute to the TVA goals.

As such, it oscillated between basic investigation and practical application, and between general applicability and local specificity. TVA architects, especially those working in the Department of Regional Planning Studies, were an inherent part of this research program. Their work, which ranged from the study of 'electrified houses' to the development of regional libraries, was also informed by the need to balance the TVA's systematic and specific goals. This fluid approach continues to shape architectural research today as it moves between 'basic' and 'applied'. An examination of the TVA effort, therefore, offers insight into the genealogy of architectural research and the importance of governmental organizations in shaping its fundamental attributes.

Late Portuguese Colonialism in Africa: The Role of the Agência Geral do Ultramar

Ana Vaz Milheiro, University of Lisbon

After the Second World War, the Portuguese government felt pressured by international institutions to decolonize its territories in Africa and Asia. In resisting this pressure, the Estado Novo government activated the Overseas General Agency (Agência Geral do Ultramar) as an institution in the service of research and the financing of projects that would aid the colonial effort. The practices of urbanism and architecture were also considered areas of action of the Agency. In the international realm, Portugal was isolated in its vindication of colonialism, a fact that required greater awareness and scientific knowledge about the decisions taken regarding the infrastructure of colonial territory. Technicians, architects and engineers had benefited from training abroad, in London (at the Architectural Association, among other institutions) or in Madrid (at the Technical University). These professionals were part of the staff of the Overseas Ministry, and were in the service of the Overseas Urbanization Office, a bureau created in 1944 to optimize the production of architectural and urban plans for the colonial territories. At the same time, the Agência Geral do Ultramar sponsored publications to disseminate knowledge acquired by architects through scientific and empirical means. Another fundamental aspect was research in topics such as medicine, climate, and agricultural and mineral resources. This research aided in decisions regarding the settlement of Europeans in Africa, as well as the organization of transportation networks, the design of settlements, and climatic solutions for buildings. This paper aims to establish whether scientific knowledge was in fact generated via the infrastructure and programmes of the Agência Geral do Ultramar, or if the knowledge applied in colonization efforts was more empirical and therefore more random. The paper is also intended to illuminate the importance of the Agency as an active agent in colonization, and not merely an institution of propaganda.

Ameliorating Research in Architecture: The Nuffield Trust and the Postwar Hospital

David Theodore, McGill University

This paper explores the influence of medicine on architectural research after the Second World War. As a case study, I look at the funding of research into hospital design by the Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust. This charitable foundation was set up in 1939 by the industrialist Lord Nuffield, William Morris, founder of Morris Motors. The Trust supplemented the King Edward's Hospital Fund, which operated in London, by coordinating hospital activities in the provinces. In 1949 the Trust partnered with the University of Bristol to investigate the functions and design of hospitals, triggering one of the most influential architectural research programs in postwar Britain. I argue that the Trust's interest in the hospital as a building type initiated a new understanding of architectural research on the model of medical research, triangulating a profession, post-graduate university training, and private philanthropy.

I focus on the writings of Richard Llewelyn Davies (later Lord Llewelyn-Davies), the Director of the Trust's investigation into hospitals from 1949–1959. Llewelyn-Davies' contributions to research as Chair at the Bartlett School of Architecture (1960–1969) are well known. Scholars including Reyner Banham, Anthony Vidler, and Alise Uptis have explored how he pioneered the techno-scientific turn in architectural pedagogy. However,

the structural change for the profession he envisioned and its basis in the Nuffield Trust model remains unexamined. His work went on to have a global influence through agencies such as the World Health Organization and his own design firm, Llewelyn-Weeks Davies, responsible for the first medical research hospital built for the National Health Service. Looking at this work as an extension of the history and agenda of the Nuffield Trust, I claim, allows us to move away from the 'internal' assessment of architectural research as a problem in pedagogy and re-centre it as a question of good governance.

State-Funded Militant Infrastructure? CERFI's 'Équipements Collectif' in the Intellectual History of Architecture

Meredith TenHoor, Pratt Institute

'Militant' research that interrogates the operations of the modern state is not often state-funded; even less common is the conception of architecture as a militant practice. Yet these two conditions coincide in the case of the French research collective CERFI (Centre d'études, de recherches et de formations institutionnelles, or Center for Institutional Studies, Research and Training.) Starting in 1967, CERFI directed state funding toward research carried out by a group of 'social workers' from various fields including psychoanalysis, architecture, education and medicine. CERFI funded research, held conferences, organized social services in New Towns in France, and published a journal, *Recherches*, which served as a record and site of dialogue about and of institutional critique of a state they believed to be intent on accumulating power.

In this paper, I plan to examine the relationship between the research contracts CERFI obtained from the French Ministry of Equipment – which enabled members of the group to write proposals and carry out concrete actions in French New Towns – and the theories of architecture and infrastructure that members of CERFI collectively wrote. CERFI's theories are expansive: concerned with the relationship between architecture and infrastructure and the actions, power relations, and fields of desire worked through them, they are, in my view, a major contribution to the intellectual history of 20th century architecture. Why did CERFI receive funding? How did CERFI become a funding institution of its own, and how did its operation as a collective and its distribution of research funds impact its theories of institutions? How can we think about the relationship between funding (which is often offered to make impactful social improvements, as it was in CERFI's case) and the project of theory-writing? I also hope to make some suggestions about how CERFI's work on the relationship between architecture, infrastructure and institutions might be relevant today, at a moment when infrastructure studies takes a more prominent role in the discipline of architecture.

Workplace Politics: The Influence and Legacy of Public-Private Collaboration in DEGW's Office Research Building Information Technology (ORBIT) Study (1983)

Amy Thomas, TU Delft

The transformation of commercial architecture since WWII is a subject of growing interest among architectural historians. Scholars have explored the political-economic relationship between real estate cycles, finance capitalism, technology and the changing nature of corporate buildings. At the basis of these studies is an assumption that state-led processes of marketisation, deregulation and privatisation *indirectly* affected the changing style and structure of office buildings from the 1970s onwards. However, as yet the *direct* involvement of the state and real estate industry in the research and development of new commercial building types has been unexplored. This paper addresses this gap by considering the collaboration between the British state, industry specialists and the office planning firm DEGW in the production of the highly influential *Office Research Building Information Technology (ORBIT) Study*, published in 1983. *ORBIT* was funded by the UK Department of Industry and the then state-owned British Telecom, alongside a consortium of industry specialists and real estate companies (including Greycoat Estates, Jones Lang Wootton and Steelcase), who were highly involved with the research and development of the project, including participation in

monthly seminars. The study's explicit aim was to assess 'the impact of information technology upon office work and office workers'. Yet underpinning the project were wider concerns about the changing accommodation needs of businesses at a time when Britain's economy was being radically reconfigured by deregulation (enacted through co-sponsor, the Department of Industry). Using the material from the recently-opened DEGW archive at the University of Reading, this paper will investigate the ways that the political-economic interests of the sponsors shaped *ORBIT* and its legacy. The paper aims to expose the institutional processes through which neoliberal policies directly influenced the direction of office design in Britain (and subsequently America), interrogating 'research' as a non-neutral mediator between ideology and built form.