

Architecture and Indeterminacy

Editorial

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When we sent out our call for papers for *Architecture and Indeterminacy*, as part of the Theory Forum we were organising at Sheffield, we didn't know what to expect. We were interested in indeterminacy as a suspension of the precise meaning of an architectural object action or idea. Our invitation to contribute to the discussion suggested that indeterminacy in architecture could be physical, material, social and political; it could be both theoretical and pragmatic, cognitive and experiential. We hoped that it would be an inspiring topic and generate an interesting response because it was open, not prescriptive and offered a forum, a shared space to address the ways in which architecture is a dynamic practice. Our research confronts the recognition that architecture incorporates interlocking yet distributed fields of knowledge, social practices and economic forces. However, architectural discourse has become anxious about itself, about its status, its contingency and its position with respect to these related yet disparate fields of interest. *Architecture and Indeterminacy* proposed to investigate those moments where there was a questioning of the disciplinary limits of theorising and practicing architecture.

At the same time we had started to imagine where the 'outputs' of events, workshops and activities in Sheffield and beyond, could be located. We had started to think that books were no longer the obvious place — partly because of the prohibitive costs of publication and partly because of the difficulty encountered by many (non academics) in finding or accessing the material. We were interested in developing a context where our work and research could be reflected on, but also where reflection on the material and immaterial conditions in which our practice as architects is engaged would be made possible. We were interested in a space of creative and critical production and not the habitual display of knowledge. This is how **field:** came about.

The journal **field:** is not an empty location waiting to be filled but hopefully will continue to be discursively formed and reformed through our practices of research and engagement. This inaugural issue of **field:** is therefore focused on the indeterminate fields of architectural practice, education and discourse.

Architecture and Indeterminacy connects disparate work, weaving narratives and arguments that bring together critical writing, creative and exploratory practice, different media and documentation. The topic was a challenge to rethink some of the ways in which we think and practice architecture; to question some of the meanings we ascribe to cities, to buildings, to social formations to individual experiences.

Peter Blundell Jones' short essay reviewed architecture's traditional investment in the symbolic, its 'use of meaning' and its capacities to encapsulate and embody 'meaning of use'.

Gil Doron's discussion of the 'dead zone', those places habitually overlooked or avoided in cities, places on the edge, places of conflict and negotiation; reveals these 'indeterminate' spaces as contested space rather than neutral or 'empty'.

Ole Fischer explores a number of recent attempts by practitioners and theorists to grapple with the indeterminacy of 'atmosphere'; among them Diller and Scofidio's 'Blur' building and Olafur Eliasson's 'Weather Project'.

Helen Hills' article opens with a discussion about the potential and shortcomings of interdisciplinary thinking for architectural debate. She presents Deleuze's concepts of 'immanence', 'intensity' and 'rhizome' as indeterminate ways of engaging with the spiritual in Baroque architecture.

Yeoryia Manolopoulou's article posits itself as an introduction to an 'architecture of chance'. She argues for the acceptance of 'chance' and 'the contingent' along with the assertion that architecture can and already does use this condition to advantage.

Peter Mörtenböck and Helge Mooshammer looked at informal markets as micro-sites of paradoxical and indeterminate cultural production, as part of their work on the EU funded project 'Networked Cultures'.

Doina Petrescu discussed the practices of tracing and senses of place in the work of Fernard Deligny with autistic children. It detailed an alternative, properly indeterminative, practice of the 'common', through ways of mapping.

Dougal Sheridan draws on personal experience of the changing nature of Berlin for his discussion of sub-culture and the actual specificity of the city's 'indeterminate' territories.

Jeremy Till's discussion wrests architecture from its comfort zone — where it is often characterised as a discipline whose primary remit is to resist contingencies — and instead to embed it in a wider set of social and economic responsibilities and circumstances.

Kim Trogal and Leo Care's contribution combines architectural theory, criticism and personal dialogue in an exploration of their experience of architectural education and the aspirations of contemporary architectural practice to resist 'determination'.

Renata Tyszczyk's article develops a series of reflections on modes of indeterminacy through the themes of narrative, imagination, experiment, games and shadows. Thinking 'indeterminacy' invites a questioning of how architecture is constructed, produced and inhabited.

The inaugural issue of **field: Architecture and Indeterminacy** is therefore the start of a conversation about architecture and also an invitation to comment, to respond and above all to engage in a forum for practice and research.