Bakhtinian dialogism as framework
for participant architectural research

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ABSTRACT:

This paper examines a framework for participant architectural research inspired by Bakhtinian dialogism. It does so by testing this approach on a current study of the recently completed Barking Town Square in Barking, England, in the context of urban regeneration in a London suburb struggling with issues of identity. A dialogic framework is derived from two principles of dialogism: entities are described by relations of parts rather than homogeneous wholes; and identities constantly change with respect to the uniqueness of a situation. For the architectural project, this means that participants and objects are defined by their relation with others in the project and that their identity changes over time as these relations evolve. It also means understanding architecture as a complex social process rather than a "thing in itself". Finally, the approach assumes the presence of an embodied subject and identifies the researcher as a participant in the architectural process. Participant architectural research therefore implies that research consciously engages in the continuing and dialogic process of giving meaning to a place. Empirical data has been collected using socio-anthropological fieldwork methods of interviewing and participant-observation for the last year and a half. This approach, more attuned to the analysis of social and cultural relations and the "Other", complements the necessary engagement implied by a dialogic framework.

CONFERENCE THEME: Approaches (alternative approaches in research methods)
KEYWORDS: Architecture, Methodology, Dialogism, Participation, Barking (London, England)

INTRODUCTION

The word "participant"[1] in "participant architectural research" implies that research, either through design or criticism, plays an active role in the process of giving meaning to a place. This role is active because research engages knowingly with the mechanism of place-making. What this paper suggests is that this engagement is dialogical and it does so by exploring a framework for participant architectural research based on Bakhtinian dialogism. To engage dialogically means to recognize that entities are primarily defined by their relations to others. This leads to a threefold way of studying architecture based on the notions of alterity, heterogeneity and participation. This approach is further supported by methods in social anthropology more attuned to the analysis of social and cultural relations and the "Other". A dialogic framework thus defines an alternative methodology for architectural research giving emphasis to both material and social relations over formal analysis. This methodology, although it may be useful in framing or re-framing any architectural project, is particularly suitable when a project is claimed to address public engagement issues. Therefore, this paper draws on an extensive case study of the Barking Town Square in Barking, England, a project with relative participatory claims and one that I have been studying intensely for the last year and a half through interviews, fieldwork and participant-observation. Following a brief introduction to the Town Square project I will define the dialogic framework and then give examples of its use in three sections corresponding to the notions of alterity, heterogeneous identity and participation.

BARKING TOWN SQUARE

The Barking Town Square is a public space project recently completed in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (LBBD). (see Figure 1) It was designed by MUF architecture/art as the public realm part of a developer-led mixed-use regeneration project called Barking Central designed by AHMM Architects. Although it has recently been handed-off to the local authority, the overall

project has taken over ten years to come to this point. In 1999, the LBBD organized an architectural competition to officially launch the project which had been on the drawing board since the late 1980s as part of their Town Centre regeneration strategy. A separate competition was held in 2004 for the public realm part which was designed and built in three phases from 2004 to 2010. In announcements ten years apart, and regardless of changes over the years, local authorities were proud to state that the new Town Square was a "new heart for Barking".

Figure 1: Plan of the Barking Town Square (left) with its location in the Town Centre. New buildings are in grey.

Barking occupies an interesting place in the national and local cultural geographies. Located in the east of Greater London in the area called the Thames Gateway, Barking is a former industrial area that has been dramatically affected by the decline of the manufacturing sector in England and has regularly been referred to as one of the country's most deprived areas. There have been regeneration efforts in the centre of Barking for the last thirty years which now seem to bear fruit with "London's move eastward". Indeed, at one point in the project four different governmental bodies from the local, London and national levels had some claim in the Town Square development, confirming the larger planning trends affecting the area. With respect to its identity, Barking is a problematic place. Its identity sits between a relatively prosperous old town of the 1920s and a generic and depressed suburban centre, between London and its surrounding counties, between the old left and far-right politics. Demographically, it is representative of larger socio-economic and immigration trends in England. This conflicting identity seems to have been exacerbated by the recent developments which makes the identity of the Town Square problematic in itself. Most designers and developers I spoke to, including the partners at MUF, agreed that the identity of the town had to somehow be reinvented. Others admitted that the town did have an identity, but that it was a "battered identity" and "not one you would wish to draw from." The local authorities in Barking acknowledge that in essence, the regeneration of the Town Centre, and especially the Town Square development, was meant to change the socio-economic nature of the town bringing in new residents on higher income. With so many actors reinventing the "heart of Barking" over a period of ten years it should not be surprising that the Town Square project appears laden with the multiple conflicts of regeneration.

The project for the Town Square did not involve direct design participation. But it had, through initiatives generated by the borough and MUF, a series of community art projects that gave the project a relative claim to public engagement. These projects aimed at somewhat alleviating the tension that may arise from lengthy regeneration projects between an existing community, local authorities, private investors, designers and new residents. As modes of engagement with the local population, we have to locate these activities somewhere between the legal requirements of consultation and the strategies of participatory design. They were neither simple questionnaire nor shared authorship,

but an alternative means of finding a place for architecture and local residents in the complex and continually evolving process of place-making. When describing these projects, both partners at MUF talk about allowing local residents to create their own narrative structures for the place over time. In other words, they see the projects as part of a longer series of similar events rather than singular occurrences. Although the involvement of the designers has ceased since the handover, the borough continues to link community engagement with the Town Square by investing in the place through its arts program. In parallel, there has been stable interest in the project from the design and education sectors, of which my current research is one example. The changing relations between participants, the duration of the project, the problematic identity of the place, the claim to public engagement by the designers and being able to participate, as a researcher, in a current process of place-making make the Barking Town Square a particularly relevant case study for a dialogic framework.

DIALOGIC FRAMEWORK

Bakhtinian dialogism describes the complex and inter-subjective relations at play in any social situation. A dialogic framework is therefore useful to conceptualize the relations between individuals engaged in a creative process and the interaction of research as part of that process. Given its emphasis on aesthetic and ethical relations, dialogism is relevant as a research and design framework in architecture. However, if we compare its use to other literary criticism and cultural theories, such as the work of Barthes or Benjamin, dialogism is relatively absent from architectural theory and criticism.[2] The present research uses dialogism as a framework for architectural design and research and thus extends the use of Bakhtin's ideas to new territory. This is not dissimilar to Haynes' use of Bakhtinian concepts. In her critique of the visual arts, she claims to be entering into a dialogue with Bakhtin's ideas, putting them into new situations, and states "I take his discourse not as authoritative, but as internally persuasive, as inviting development, extension, and application toward the goal of creative understanding." (1995, 15) It must be noted, though, that one of the reasons behind the lack of architectural scholarship employing Bakhtin is that his texts do not explicitly address material or spatial concerns so these have to be inferred or "materialized". (see Brandist and Tikhanov 2000; Côté 2000; and Gardiner 2000) For the present study two fundamental aspects of dialogism are employed: entities are described by relations of parts rather than homogeneous wholes; and identities constantly change with respect to the uniqueness of a situation.

Because dialogism conceives of people and objects as a set of relations changing over space and time, it may be put forward that dialogism would describe architecture similarly. In other words, a dialogic conception of architecture is akin to the one derived from Lefebvre which understands architecture as a process over time and space rather than as a "thing in itself". (see Lefebvre 1991, 90; and Borden 2001, 6-9) For Lefebvre, the reduction of social processes into specialized categories means treating something as a spectacle rather than "uncovering its latent social relationships." (Lefebvre 1991, 90) Bakhtin warns us of the same, although for him such rigid categorization is framed as covering the "brute heteroglossia of the real world and crude real life." (Bakhtin 1981, 386) Instead of seeing these categories as fixed, "Bakhtin problematizes such demarcations, sees them as fluid, permeable and always contested" (Gardiner 2004, 30) and thus allows for the heterogeneity of society with all contradictions, agreements and disagreements to be accounted for. So if we take the development and use of the architectural project as a social process with cultural, economic and political ramifications then the "social theory" derived from dialogism becomes especially pertinent to contemporary architectural research. (see for example Crossley and Roberts 2004; Gardiner 2004; Hirschkop 1999; Hirschkop 2004; Morson and Emerson 1990; Roberts 2008) What this theory suggests is a framework opposite to any idealized conception of society. It also takes everyday life as its foundation and thus emphasizes the importance of the embodied subject (or user) rather than its idealized version. (Gardiner 2004) The object of design, in this case, becomes both a result and a structuring element of the complex dialogic relations between client, user, designer, builder and researcher.

In terms of methodology within architectural research, dialogism is best approached through cross-disciplinary methods drawing on social anthropology. In this research project, participant-observation, interviews and fieldwork have played major roles. The emphasis of these methods on the

reality and presence of the researcher is essential to architectural research in which the researcher's role is acknowledged as a participant in the project. For the last year and a half I have been studying the Barking Town Square using this approach, interviewing designers, other participants and residents. As is argued by Proctor (2006), the principal goal of this approach is not only to gather information but to understand how the different participants conceive of the project and ultimately conceive of others in relation to the project. I have also lived in Barking, observing, participating in local events, establishing a network of contacts and organizing workshops on public space. My presence is therefore not disinterested and I am consciously engaging in the process of place-making that is currently happening in Barking.

ALTERITY

The founding principle of dialogism is that it is impossible to conceive of any entity outside of the relations that link it to the other. (Todorov 1984, 94) This suggests that an entity (a person, an organization, a project) can only be understood when taking into account the influence it has on others and the influence others have on it. It also suggests that larger wholes made up of such entities are not homogeneous, but complex heterogeneities. This tentatively links Bakhtinian dialogism with assemblage theory in which wholes at varying scales are characterized primarily by relations of exteriority. (DeLanda 2006) It also allows us to avoid micro- and macro-reductionism so that an entity at any scale can be said to have "objective existence". (40) This link may seem tentative at first, but it is quite useful in defining a framework which takes into account all participants in a project, from individual persons to individual organizations, and the effect they have on each other.[3]

Let us take the firm MUF as example. Understanding the Town Square project through a dialogic framework means conceiving of the designers as an assemblage of external relations. So instead of being independent, MUF becomes a network of relations between themselves and the LBBD, other architects, the developer, sub-consultants, local residents, etc. (see Figure 2) This situates the participant in the social reality of the project. In this case, a firm made up individual persons becomes

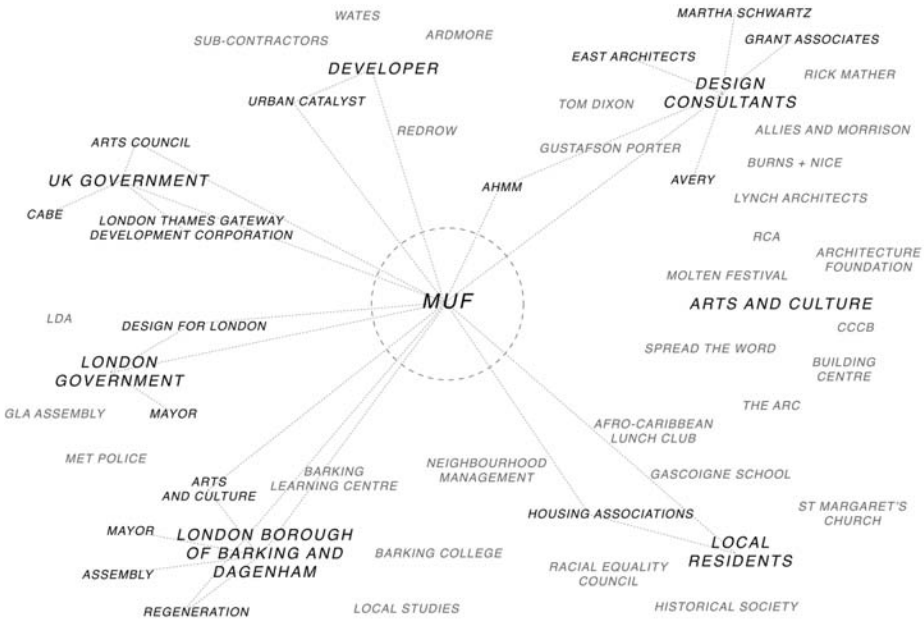

Figure 2: The design firm MUF as an assemblage of external relations with other organisations. The dashed lines indicate a specific instance of this assemblage in time showing relations circa December 2004 when MUF was appointed to the project.

its own entity. At a certain scale, as De Landa explains, it is appropriate to think of MUF as an individual participant regardless of its internal relational structure. Whether a design decision was taken by partners Liza Fior and Katherine Clarke or others in the office is only relevant depending on context and scale. What is important is that we understand decisions as part of an assemblage of relations. This reaches to the beginning of MUF's involvement in the project with their appointment. The important aspect of the decision in terms of alterity, according to informants, was that MUF presented an alternative to the safer and perhaps more developer-friendly Martha Schwartz, another competing firm. So from the start, their place in the project is defined by a relation to an other. This follows into design development and MUF's collaboration with the building architects in the project. Informants from both firms concurred that at times decisions were made separately and other times conjointly but always in relation to each other's work. With the borough, the designers developed what was described to me as a "special relationship", one that was "like family". Liza Fior insisted on this, stressing that although MUF was employed by the developer, they acted on the knowledge that the Square would eventually be handed over to the borough and so kept in close contact with key participants at the LBBD. With the local residents the relationship is more complex. Public engagement was limited to peripheral activities not included in the main contract and only with specific groups. Although this exposure meant for the architects that they were exposed to "a different set of demands" it also meant that the majority of local residents were not exposed to the work of the office. Indeed, both AHMM and MUF are routinely confounded by local residents into a single "architect" responsible for both buildings and open space. However specific or general the engagement may be, what matters in this study is that both participants, MUF and local residents, are defined by their particular relationship.

Similarly, the Barking Town Square needs to be understood in relation to its context. Here again scale plays a defining role. Whereas the project itself is an assemblage of "other" places: an arboretum, a plaza, a stage, a folly, and an arcade, the project within Barking only makes sense in relation to other local public spaces. As it was described by an informant, "it's part of the Town Centre and it's making this whole place work." (see Figure 3) A 2003 urban framework anticipates this by representing the

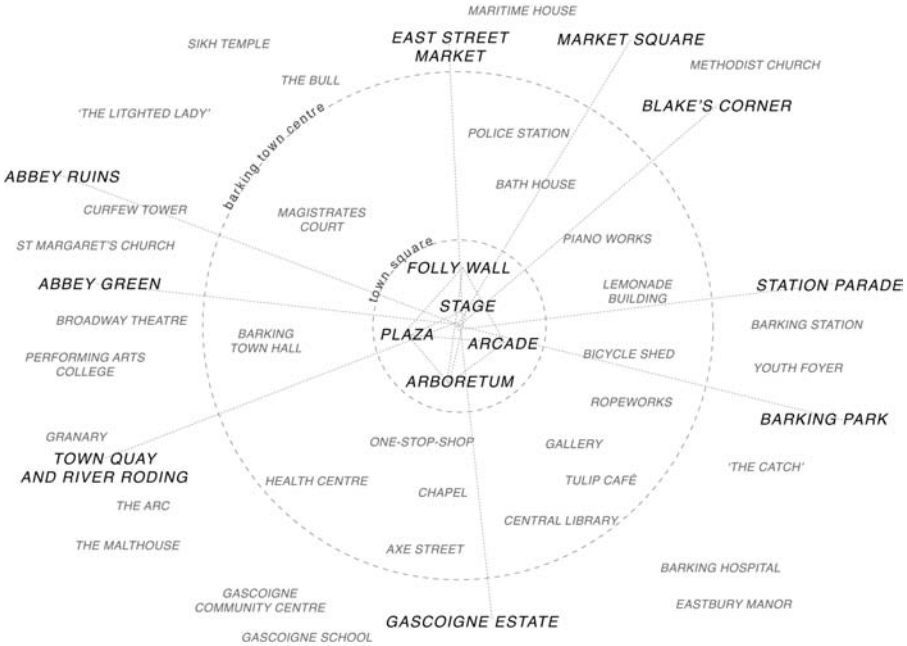

Figure 3: The Town Square (in centre, broken down into individual elements) as an assemblage of relations with other places in the Barking Town Centre. The dashed lines indicate connections between the Town Square and the surrounding open spaces.

Town Centre as Debord's *plaques tournantes*. Within the Town Centre, the Town Square needs to be understood in relation with the existing fabric as well: a civic core within a small commercial centre surrounded by low density housing estates. This was the historic part of the town know as "Old Barking", but it is now mostly dominated by architecture of the last sixty years with few listed buildings. The new development has very little relation to the existing fabric and the "otherness" of the project reinforces the relation between old and new. If we move to the scale of the LBBD or London the relations change accordingly. Within the borough, Barking is continuously contrasted with neighboring Dagenham, a large suburban residential area. Most of my informants repeated the same thing: Barking is the focus of regeneration and a place with history while in Dagenham "there is nothing to give emphasis to." The relation of Barking within Greater London is defined by its incorporation into London in 1965. A local resident expressed this by saying that the most significant change she had witnessed in her lifetime was that Barking had "altered from a clearly defined town on the London/Essex border into part of the greater London overspill." So according to a dialogic framework, the Town Square needs to be understood as a series of relations at different scales rather than a "thing in itself". It would indeed be impossible to define the identity of the Town Square without putting it in relation to the Town Centre, to Dagenham and to Greater London.

IDENTITY AND HETEROGENEITY

The reliance on alterity in Bakhtin's thought leads to conceiving of identities as constantly evolving rather than fixed (Bakhtin, Holquist, and Liapunov 1993, vol. 1). The identity of an entity does not evolve independently, but according to its relation to others and the uniqueness of situations. An entity is therefore "unfinalizable", according to Bakhtin, because its parts can never be made into a fixed whole. But this does not mean that the identity of a participant or a project lacks any sense or definition. In both Bakhtin and De Landa we encounter elements that contribute to the definition of identity either by making it more homogeneous or heterogeneous. These are centripetal and centrifugal forces in Bakhtin (acting on heteroglossia), and territorializing and deterritorializing factors in De Landa (acting on assemblages). In the case of architecture, the identity of the project or any participant is affected according to the actions of individuals and their immediate context, through use or interpretation over time, and this is what makes the project ultimately "unfinalizable".

Let us start from the same departure point using MUF as an example. We have seen how within a dialogic framework the designers are defined by their relations to other participants in the project. These relations in turn are what constitute the designer's identity, which evolves over time and according to specific situations. In this case, the identity of MUF at the start of the project can be said to be somewhat homogeneous contextually. It is very much defined by the previous work of the office and the relation it already has with some of the participants, but it is yet to evolve according to the particular evolution of the project. For example, there was a change of developer in 2005 which meant that the designers had to adjust to a new situation. MUF designing in 2004, at the very start of the project and employed by the previous developer, is not MUF designing post-2006 and employed by the new developer. The change had a destabilizing effect on the designers' identity, so that it cannot be said to be homogeneous throughout the project. Liza Fior, for example, speaks of making specific design decisions in order to "gain trust" with their new client. On the other hand, a handful of key people from the LBBD followed the project throughout, which gave a sense of stability to an otherwise unstable process. MUF's relationship with the LBBD, therefore, could be said to have had a counter-balancing homogenizing tendency on their identity as a designer in Barking.

In a similar way, the identity of the Town Square has evolved over the years according to public representation, design intentions and management issues. Let us start with its representation to the public. Standard consultation happened in the early stages of the project but never on MUF's design for the Town Square whose principles (drawn first by Avery and then AHMM) had been accepted before 2004. The original competition entries for Barking Central were exhibited and voted on in 1999 but had little to do with what was eventually designed and built. This meant that when the final project was exhibited in 2007 and finally built it bore very little resemblance to what people originally saw and voted on in 1999. Yet at the same time it also meant that people who had not seen the original project wondered why this had been built without proper consultation evidenced

by the repeated comment "nobody asked me for *my* opinion" and the overall sense of disconnection between local residents and local authority. In a similar way, some design choices destabilize the project's identity within Barking by deliberately importing references from Edwardian England, France and Italy. Furthermore, the folly wall, the subject of a separate commission to MUF by the LBBD Arts department, quite literally re-constructs a fictional historical artifact by the assemblage of architectural salvage material, none of which was sourced locally. For the designers, this is part of the re-invention of Barking's contemporary "battered identity" through narrative. For some local residents the folly does act as a foil for the continuing regeneration process, but for others, these intentions are yet another sign of lost identity.

A good example of centripetal and centrifugal forces acting on identity came out of a recent workshop I organized on the use and management of the Square. In one conversation, representatives from the local authority agreed that the Town Square requires a strong identity, making it more homogeneous. "It needs its own brand and to be its own entity." Another said "you need to establish that brand and have a program across the year so that people identify the square with events, activities, somewhere to get information. So that is its identity." However, at the same time, they looked for ways of having it appropriated by a variety of publics doing different activities, thus making it more heterogeneous. "Initially the council as an entity should promote the space as an open space." By marketing it that way, it was hoped that the a "flow of ideas" would come from the public taking more "ownership of the place". Another example of these conflicting factors influencing identity is found in the design intentions for the Square. On the one hand, the partners at MUF describe the design of the space in terms of "open-ended design", "ambiguous detailing" and "making space for more than one thing at a time". For example, the area of the Square is divided into four distinct zones each with its own label and aesthetic identity, which has led certain critics to describe the project as collage, in other words something without a fixed meaning. But on the other hand, the partners also acknowledge that the design is quite prescriptive in its physicality. Its nature as a constructed artifact makes it relatively resistant to change. So while the place is designed to allow for a variety of uses it also prescribes what these uses could be.

Because we are taking architecture as a process rather than as an object, it makes sense that Bakhtin's principle of unfinalizabitlity applies to this study. That is to say, the architectural project is not finalized when construction is complete. The workshop mentioned above is one example of how participants in the project are acting on the evolving identity of the Square and re-inventing its meaning through management and use. Another example is how, after the involvement of the architects has ended, the council has continued investing in the place through its Arts and Regeneration departments, using it as an official venue for events. We may think that for the designers the project is finalized once it has been handed over to the client. It is only in a very narrow sense. In an interview with individuals at MUF, it was clear that there was a sense that the project was indeed completed. As mentioned above, the "prescriptive" physical aspects of the project were enough to give it that sense. As were the immediate concerns of management and care. But it is quite the opposite for their representation of the project which has evolved over the last few years in lectures and interviews with some aspects being left out and others added.

The conception of entities based on external relations means to understand identity as the result of a constantly evolving dialogue. The important point for a dialogic framework is that this is true for the identity of both the project and its participants. Furthermore, conflicting aspects of identity, like the centripetal and centrifugal forces mentioned above, are not problematic or illogical but inherent aspects of heterogeneities. Contradictions like "open-ended" and "prescriptive" can naturally co-exist.

PARTICIPANT RESEARCH

The concept of participation is a rather tricky one to derive from Bakhtinian dialogism. Because the bulk of Bakhtin's work is literary criticism, the notion of participation has to be abstracted from the aesthetic and ethical relations between author, character and reader, as mediated through a work of art. (see Hirschkop 2004, 61) In our case, these relations are mediated through a work of architecture. The critique of the author found in post-structuralism or reception theory, for example, is also found in Bakhtin's critique of authorship. The reader plays an active role in defining the

meaning of a particular work that is partially independent of the author. Switch reader for user or interpreter and the corresponding critique in architecture can be described through dialogism. Participation, in this sense, is a wide-reaching notion because it may mean different but related activities. A participant may well be engaged in design, construction, and/or interpretation and still be participating in the process of place-making. The important principle is that their participation influences the overall definition of the place by creating another set of relations of alterity and by either affirming or transforming the identity of the place. Furthermore, and as is the case in social-anthropological fieldwork, the participant researcher must be conscious of their own effect on the process investigated and make this part of their research.

There are two significant ways in which my own actions as a researcher influence the process of place-making in Barking. The first is the influence I have on other participants, on their identity and their understanding of the project. Architecture and design are not easy things to discuss, and this dramatically influences the interview process. When we take architecture as a social process, it only makes matters more complex. More often than once, I sat down with a local resident to have a chat about the Town Square when they had never discussed the matter before. On these occasions, I would often answer questions about the details of the project, realizing that in the end, I had directly affected the informant's understanding of the project. The same is true of my relationship with the designers. Because we have had several interviews, ideas have had time to cross over. While the first interview I had with Liza Fior was much about her talking through some facts about the project, the last two have been closer to a dialogue during which we discuss and exchange ideas. For example, a question about defining the word "public" prompts her to write down her answer for future use. On another occasion, some photographs I took find their way into her representation of the project. With respect to the council, I have recently organized a workshop on the use and management of the Town Square, deliberately interacting in the process because it felt important that there be a dialogue on the matter.

The second way is the reverse of the first, or how other participants affect my understanding of the project. One of the reasons why social-anthropological methods are relevant in this case is that the project does not have the advantage of a fixed archive as a historical project would have. Research started while design and construction were still under way so most documents are still unaccounted for. This means that my understanding of the project evolved alongside its own evolution, supported more by a network of informants, on site observations and participation in events than existing literature. Some informants have had more impact then others, especially when they want to meet several times, are quite liberal about their opinions, or introduce me to their friends and colleagues I "have to speak to". Sometimes I would catch myself talking through one particular aspect of the project, framing the answer according to the person in front of me. In the end, my understanding of Barking and the Town Square is very much based on the network of relations I will have established during research. What is important, in this case, is to monitor how the researcher's understanding moves from prejudices to informed opinions. It is also about carefully framing each research event in the uniqueness of its situation: who is involved, where does it take place, does it relate to other events, etc.

CONCLUSION

To summarize, a dialogic framework for architectural research is based on three notions: alterity, heterogeneous identity, and participation. There are three main reasons that stand out in the analysis as to why a dialogic framework is relevant. The first is that such an approach describes architecture as an intricate social process over time rather than a "thing in itself". The second is that by focusing on relations, such a framework bridges the gap between material and social concerns in architecture. And finally, the approach assumes the presence of an embodied subject and therefore identifies the researcher as a participant in the architectural process. It would follow that any architectural project could be studied through a dialogic framework as an evolving series of relations. But what would be perhaps more interesting would be its use to study practices and theories claiming an element of participation or public engagement; what place-making, community architecture, participatory design, open-ended design, creative use (Hill 1998), and relational architecture (Petcou and Petrescu

2007) all have in common is that they address a **relational problem** first and foremost. In this sense, architecture benefits from being understood dialogically because the main participants in a project (client, designer, builder, user) are realistically situated in the "crude reality" of a socio-economic and political process that resembles a dialogue rather than a linear successions of events.

A further point of reflection can be addressed as a conclusion. It is evident that time plays a major role in a dialogic understanding of architecture. Not only because architecture is viewed as a process, but because long term engagement is necessary for architectural research and design to have any lasting effect on the process of giving meaning to a place. While the principal design firm was involved in Barking for a relatively brief period of time, it nevertheless had the benefit of working on separate commissions for public art projects that were part of the council's scheme for community engagement. This investment of the LBBD into the Town Square as a public engagement venue continues to this day, and so the designers were involved in a process that purposely goes beyond the time limitation of their contract. In addition, the scheduling of the project (perhaps unwittingly by the developers) into three phases over five years allowed for a dialogue to take place between the developer, council and the design firm that was not only mediated by drawn representations, but by actual physical construction. The physical form of the Town Square is thus allowed to somewhat transform over time according to a continuously changing set of constraints and possibilities. Also, the involvement of participants who followed the project through, a public design consultation body like Design for London for example, or particular members of the LBBD council, ensured continuity in the project that would have been otherwise hard to achieve solely through the private sector. Finally, architectural research can support this continued process by engaging with it rather than remain a passive observer. For example, organizing workshops with participants who otherwise would not have time to do so benefits research, the project and ultimately the place in question.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The development of this paper owes to the generous and helpful comments and reviews of Jan Birksted (UCL), Emmy Young, and the three anonymous reviewers of the ARCC.

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ENDNOTES

[1]Throughout this paper, and unless otherwise specified, I will use the word "participant" to mean an individual person or group who officially participates in the project through design, funding, management, etc., as well as an individual person or group who participates either through use or criticism. In other words, a participant is anybody who is engaged in the process of place-making in Barking.

[2]This is not strictly speaking the case for all of Bakhtin's concepts. Jean La Marche's (2005) mediated construction project explores the relationship between architecture, dialogism and surrealism. Rob Shields' (1991) writing on Brighton uses the carnivalesque to explore social behaviour in public spaces. Hays (1996) briefly touches on the chronotope in studying Heyduk's work. And in geography, Holloway and Kneale (2000) have developed a conception of dialogic space by tracing the incremental scale of Bakhtin's concepts.

[3]Although I am aware of the many dangers of linking dialogism and assemblage theory (for example Bakhtin and De Landa's fundamental disagreement on the linguistic basis of experience), the goal of this paper is not to resolve these differences or have them co-exist, but to develop a framework that goes beyond their initial pairing. There is a tendency in Bakhtin's concepts to reduce an entity to its smallest fundamental parts. This is helpful at times, but may seem like overkill otherwise. De Landa's theory is helpful in adjusting this imbalance.