

combination of poor management, squeezed margins and government-offloaded risk made for unsustainably weak cash flows. The Secretary of State killed one conception of the future, putting at risk the discursive foundations of the project as a whole since '[f]rom the investor's perspective, the value of investing in an innovative activity depends entirely on the perceived credibility of the envisioned future present' (Beckert, 2016: 186).

PFI is only the most exaggerated form of this enhanced capability to import capital from the future. Italy, for example, has loans from the European Investment Bank and grants from private and religious institutions to fund school-building and the discursive construction of employment-linked, innovative schooling. The former signals the produced unavailability of funds in the present – Italy's public debt is the highest in the EU after Greece (Eurostat, 2016).

Demanding the Future Now and Consequences

Where educational financing *for* the future is now seen by governments less as a moral or social commitment and instead as an investment in human resources, education and school-building become predicated on returns being devolved *in* the future. Attention easily shifts away from the present to a deferred and depopulated, distant time. In England, BSF was part of a broader pattern, a performative step over the present and into the future where its academy schools:

literally stand for and represent, in their buildings and infrastructure, new, bold and different thinking – more of the dynamic rhetoric of New Labour ... As texts the Academy buildings are enactments of a new 'imaginary' economy. (Ball, 2007: 172)

These imaginaries and fictional expectations should not be discarded as insignificant word play. Beckert's point is that such visions of the future can come to be causally efficacious, to 'have real consequences because dominant discourses affect the distribution of resources' (2016: 185). But further, they also affect the *mode* in which resources are distributed. Hence, in addition to making finance available from the future, more radical means of achieving buildings are stim-

PFI is only the most exaggerated form of this enhanced capability to import capital from the future.

In addition to making finance available from the future, more radical means of achieving buildings are stimulated through the encouragement to move harder, faster and more thoroughly into the future.

The end result is that knowledge about buildings and their users is made more difficult to access.

The *now* is a space of real people available to consider their immediate and future needs in terms that accord with their own values yet school-building in both style and form has recently tended to overreach this present in search of more fertile (financially) but also less accountable futures.

ulated through the encouragement to move harder, faster and more thoroughly into the future:

BSF investment ... is about step change, innovation, stretch goals, challenging orthodoxies, and will potentially involve radical shifts from current practice. (Partnerships for Schools, 2009: 5)

A consequence of this sleight of temporal organisation and shift in values from the moral and social to the financial is the obscuring of the user through the financial instruments adopted. This happens in two ways. First, design-wise because ‘the machinery of PFI meant that teachers and governors had limited contact with the people designing their buildings’ (Moore, 2012: 229; see also CABE, 2007: 44). Second, in terms of learning about buildings in use since, as Leaman, Stevenson, and Bordass (2010: 576) argue Post-Occupancy Evaluation is made harder through PFI: knowledge is effectively privatised within the various fragments of the procurement chain where it is either silo-ed or becomes withheld as part of a firm’s comparative advantage. Either way, the end result is that knowledge about buildings and their users is made more difficult to access, is shared less and so is increasingly denied to future designers who might seek to shape new schools using the results of empirical enquiry and (to the extent it is possible) the interests, values and experiences of users, even of other buildings.

However, ‘step change’, ‘challenging orthodoxies’ and ‘radical shifts’ are also dangerous for education itself – especially when the people who are subjected to those changes are excluded from decisions about how it happens. Further, as bell hooks writes of education, being radical can mean needing to avoid precisely the kind of step change that future-reaching encourages since ‘our visions for tomorrow are most vital when they emerge from the concrete circumstances of change we are experiencing right now’ (2003: 12). The *now* is a space of real people available to consider their immediate and future needs in terms that accord with their own values yet school-building in both style and form has recently tended to overreach this present in search of more fertile (financially) but also less accountable futures.

So far, this paper has focused mostly on England yet these discourses are international and internationalizing. The OECD has been one of the players helping to nudge countries towards a future focus via the mechanism of ‘mutual surveillance’ (OECD, n.d.: online) and publishing documents such as *21st Century Learning Environments*. Here the OECD invites countries to shift their focus not simply on to but *into* the future: ‘How can design transform existing facilities to achieve future educational goals?’ (OECD, 2006: 11). Not current goals but *future* ones are what counts. Here, a further deferral of interest and knowledge production takes place in a more uncertain time and space, reinforced by the reciprocal surveillance posed in questions such as ‘Are governments investing in new educational facilities for the 21st century?’ (ibid.). Hence, as well as distancing users from design, a too strong focus on the future risks an additional epistemological disjuncture. Not only are future users unavailable for comment or participation, their space of imagination and possibility is at one more remove.

This problem has been explored in depth by Doreen Massey whose work has focussed on concepts of space including their implications for how we think about time. In much of the discourse of school-building programmes and their financial stimuli there lies the still-undead sense of modernist progress, a vision that the future can be written now with enough forethought (and money). Space – seen as the enclosure of people rather than the result of their activities and social lives – is aligned to a temporal plan, one that simply needs to be unfurled by the technicians best positioned to elaborate it:

In these conceptions of singular progress (of whatever hue), temporality itself is not really open. The future is already foretold; inscribed into the story. (Massey, 2005: 68)

If the story is already part-written, then the space for people to choose, make and control their own futures is limited.

There is, then, a constellation of interests that positions ideas of school design in the ever-distant future. It is, simultaneously, epistemological, financial, spatial, aesthetic, involving professionals and their educational and architectural imaginaries, national

Space – seen as the enclosure of people rather than the result of their activities and social lives – is aligned to a temporal plan, one that simply needs to be unfurled by the technicians best positioned to elaborate it.

governments and supra-national bodies all celebrating what and who we do not have at the expense of what and who we do. The editorial director of both “The Architectural Review” and “The Architects’ Journal”, Paul Finch, says boldly and approvingly that ‘All architecture is about the future’ (2015:online). But there’s the rub. People in schools will have to live in a present that is partly shaped by other parties’ thinking of the future and their relatively greater power at materialising it. Schools and school systems are forever pushed forwards in part by ‘the role of fear, and particularly the fear of being behind and the fear of being left behind’ (Biesta, 2015: 351). And, in a parallel to bell hooks’ comments on education practice, cited above, Keri Facer has critiqued the production of knowledge and discourse within education *research*, it too being responsible for generating future-reaching visions: ‘education research needs to ... find ways to mobilise *the present* as a resource of powerful contingency and possibility’ (original emphasis, 2013: 142). This is therefore a genuinely self-reinforcing constellation of fields crossing education, architecture, finance and supporting the logic of selling partly-made futures.

The mission to move the attentions of educational research and practice to the present could be helped by a humbler, less heroic approach to school-building. Instead of attempting to make itself commercially useful by invoking desires unlikely to be realisable by their users, architecture could support the work of teachers and students in the presents they want to make now where the ‘challenge [of building good schools] is simplified by giving up the attempt to predict the future’ (Woolner et al., 2005: 38). However, such a move would require that the drivers encouraging edu-architectural future-reaching be neutralised. The following section identifies some of these and their tendencies to colonize futures that might otherwise be more open in the present.

Rejecting the Past, and Crisis as a Stimulus for Future-Reaching

Much contemporary discussion of education and school architecture dismisses the past as a discontinuous, burdensome collection of redundant experiences. In this logic, the past is not a resource but a weight

dragging the capacities of human resource development backwards. In form, this appears similar to the high modernism of a century ago which James C. Scott critiqued for its treatment of the past as ‘an impediment, a history that must be transcended’ (1998: 95). More structurally, however, this new future-reaching is different: the state has off-loaded risk and the production of new futures onto private bodies or supra-national organisations such as the OECD have moved in to claim and sell their own visions. The past is therefore still valuable but only because it serves as a usefully dysfunctional *other* against which innovation and ‘radical shifts from current practice’ can be offered as solutions. The substantial content of the past is evacuated. As one educator working on the Citizen School Project in Porto Alegre, Brazil noted at a recent conference on educational futures, ‘Neoliberalism obliterates the past’ (Gandin, 2017). This obliteration carries risks. Mary and David Medd, for example, whose work on schools in a Department of Education in-house team where action research enabled both ‘continuity of experience and economies of scale’ (Franklin et al., 2012: 397) pointed out the potential effects in an as yet unpublished collection of notes on school design revisiting their educational aims through architecture. These were:

...to design not for an unidentified future, but for the present. Designing for the present doesn’t mean designing for yesterday, but for what percipient people can now identify as the growing points – i.e. the way forward – this is evolution ... This is nothing to do with designing for the Future ... Designing for the unknown means designing for nothing. (2009: 43)

However, such are the political and financial gains from reaching into the future to finance solutions that seem to deal with the present’s perceived problems, that school-building moves forward by narrating its own historiography, dragging architecture with it. So, in their *Consultation on a new approach to capital investment*, the Department for Education and Skills wrote that ‘The extra money now available [through PFI] presents a historic opportunity’ (2003: 4). These new schools were not, in a sense, for today’s students

The state has off-loaded risk and the production of new futures onto private bodies or supra-national organisations.

School-building moves forward by narrating its own historiography, dragging architecture with it.

The promotion of an urgent need to move to the future by turning away from the past confirms the existence of a crisis, with both material and discursive foundations.

Crises (real, exaggerated or invented) can be shaped discursively to provide backing for particular forms of innovation.

but for imagined future ones, and designed with a proper ‘visible inheritance’ (ibid.) that only architecture *and* private finance could achieve: the state was no longer *enough*.

The promotion of an urgent need to move to the future by turning away from the past confirms the existence of a crisis, with both material and discursive foundations. In Italy, for example, the inadequacy of many schools’ resistance to earthquakes is cause for genuine concern. But such inadequacy is always the result of political choices, of decisions not to have invested previously, to have spent money elsewhere and to continue to do so. One outcome is what has been called an ‘emergenza scuola’ because of the ‘degradation deriving from years of immobile resources’ (Gallo, 2011: xviii) and a ‘vacuum in terms of political, administrative and financial planning’ (ibid.: xx). Much of the discursive messaging of BSF and this Italian example evidence the existence of what Dana Cuff calls architecture’s ‘crisis mentality’ (2012: 390), where:

a dire state of affairs is variously attributed to the economy, stylistic confusion, a lack of creativity, poor construction, the state of education, and so on. This professional anxiety can serve as a call to action that intellectuals and practitioners produce and listeners grasp. A convincingly significant message of catastrophe demands collective response. The digital revolution, the surveillance city, the World Trade Center site, the Katrina-ravaged Gulf Coast, global warming – each has been variously construed as a crisis that requires architectural remediation ... Disaster scenarios hold the potential for innovation: the old ways have not worked, so new solutions are necessary. (Ibid.)

Hence crises (real, exaggerated or invented) can be shaped discursively to provide backing for particular forms of innovation – architectural, financial and political where the state is seen as being unable to resolve problems and where market-based solutions then appear as both necessary and more natural.

Conclusion and Tentative Alternatives

The purpose of this section is to draw together the threads in the above discussion and, in doing so, suggest alternatives.

I have shown that new methods of funding school-building have grown in place of exhausted (or rejected) opportunities for growth in the present. Here, capital – aided by architecture and narratives of educational crisis in the 21st century – has helped to colonize possible futures-in-the-present, deferring the state’s obligations, reducing its risk but also distancing users from the present as both objects of knowledge and as subjects with a *range* of presents available to them. Control over which futures are available is therefore rationed since those in possession of discursive tools to manage its production and the political capital to make certain representations more likely can begin to define futures before others have a chance: ‘Competition for resources for innovation is to a great extent a power struggle over the credibility of imaginary futures’ (Beckert, 2016: 184). In turn, these struggles have real effects since they legitimate the provision of resources and the better resourced of these ‘can thus prevent or marginalize alternative futures’ (Beckert, 2016: 185).

However, implicit in the discussion of these problems are the means of their mitigation. Some – such as the direct problems with PFI and its tendency to obscure or privatise knowledge about the interests of the students and teachers using schools – have already been noted. Others – such as the need to focus more on the present – have been referenced through a range of commentators’ works. But what would focussing more on the present mean in practice? What else, besides this broad injunction, is possible? Some suggestions follow.

One way forward is to challenge some of the basic premises on which school-building tends to happen. Are national school-building *programmes*, for example, the only means of building schools? They tend to build-in future scarcity of funding by providing capital in waves that is therefore no longer available in increments and/or that needs to be repaid with interest – a solution that prefigures the next crisis. They seem to reinforce centralised political control and are sometimes called on to serve purposes that are distracting from education and community-building. Instead, if funding were ‘smoother’ and devolved directly to smaller political units below the nation-state level (as they once were, in England and

One way forward is to challenge some of the basic premises on which school-building tends to happen.

Because of their continuing role in designing the buildings where students spend so much time, this discussion should involve architects too.

Italy), enabling buildings to be extended as and when local needs determined, there may be more room for the present and the people who inhabit this time. One small-scale illustration of this can be seen in Berlin. Here, the Bonus-Programm grants schools which have 50 per cent or more of their students from low-income families extra funds to spend on school improvement in ways that they see fit. Once architecture practice, Bauereignis Sütterlin Wagner, works with these schools (and directly with the students) to improve the buildings, spaces and sometimes the external grounds. The school community's relative autonomy is interesting here from both an architectural and educational perspective but perhaps more importantly, in terms of the above discussion, the funding helps to retain spatial and educational imaginations in the present and closer to the teachers and students who use the spaces, a small but significant recognition of the fact that 'the real and most important designer of the school should be the collectivity which uses it' (De Carlo, 1969: 32).

The above example is a modest and local one but perhaps this is how and where discussion of any possible architectural assistance in supporting educational change should happen. If we accept that 'in democratic societies there should be an ongoing discussion about the purposes of education' (Biesta, 2009: 39) then there is a need for large and small-scale discussion with local needs and actual rather than abstracted people taking part in conversations about the range of educational futures that might be kept open. Because of their continuing role in designing the buildings where students spend so much time, this discussion should involve architects too. This means asking existential questions before queries about style, method or efficiency as Giancarlo De Carlo indicated:

we cannot deal with problems of 'how to' without first posing the problems of 'why'. If we were to begin discussing immediately the best way to build school buildings for contemporary society without first clarifying the reasons for which contemporary society needs school buildings, we would run the risk of taking for granted definitions and judgements which may not make sense any more; and our speculations would turn out to be sandcastles. (1969: 12)



Fig. 1 - Students of the Carl-Kraemer-Grundschule, Berlin at work transforming their classroom. Photo: ©Bauereignis.



Fig. 2 - Their finished classroom. Photo: ©Bauereignis.

Finally, therefore, it would pay to recognise that imagined futures do not need to be exclusionary. As well as beginning with including students, teachers and others who work in schools, we (and I write as an educationalist) would do well to resist the continued exclusion of architects from discussions about educational futures, how they are funded and they might be realized spatially. Debates about efficiency gains in education in the future are likely to continue emphasizing the role of online learning. With this, the importance of engaging more deeply with questions

of place and opportunities for being physically located with others suggests experts in educational and spatial organization are needed now.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions on a previous version of the article, to The Leverhulme Trust for the award of a Study Abroad Studentship (SAS-2016-023) and to the University of Florence, Italy for their hospitality as a Visiting Post-Doctoral Researcher.

References

- Anderson, J. (2016), *Schools are finally teaching what kids need to be successful in life* [Online]. Available at: <http://qz.com/656900/schools-are-finally-teaching-what-kids-need-to-be-successful-in-life/> [Accessed: 31 July 2018].
- Ball, S. J. (2007), *Education plc: Understanding Private Sector Participation in Public Sector Education*, London, Routledge.
- BBC (2016), *PFI schools built in Scotland 'owned by offshore firms'* [Online]. Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-37135611> [Accessed: 31 July 2018].
- Beckert, J. (2016), *Imagined Futures: Fictional Expectations and Capitalist Dynamics*, Cambridge (MA), Harvard University Press.
- Biesta, G. (2009) *Good Education in an Age of Measurement: on the need to reconnect with the question of purpose in education*, "Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability", 21 (1), pp. 33-46.
- Biesta, G. (2015), *Resisting the seduction of the global education measurement industry: notes on the social psychology of PISA*, "Ethics and Education", 10 (3), pp. 348-360.
- Biondi, G. et al. (2017), *Dall'Aula all'Ambiente di Apprendimento*, Firenze, Altralinea.
- Burke, C., Grosvenor, I. (2008), *School*, London, Reaktion Books.
- CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) (2007), *Creating Excellent Secondary Schools: a guide for clients* [Online]. Available at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110118095356/http://www.cabe.org.uk/files/creating-excellent-secondary-schools.pdf> [Accessed: 31 July 2018].
- Cuff, D. (2012), *Introduction: Architecture's Double-Bind*, in C. Greig Crysler et al. (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Architectural Theory*, London, SAGE, pp. 385-392.
- De Carli, S. (2017), *Ecco perché la finanza di impatto deve puntare sulla scuola* [Online]. Available at: <http://www.vita.it/it/article/2017/07/03/ecco-perche-la-finanza-di-im->

patto-deve-puntare-sulla-scuola/143891/ [Accessed: 31 July 2018].

De Carlo, G. (1969), *Why/How to Build School Buildings*, “Harvard Educational Review”, 39 (4), pp. 12-35.

Department for Education and Skills (2003), *Building Schools for the future: Consultation on a new approach to capital investment* [Online]. Available at: https://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/downloadableDocs/211_2.pdf

Dickens, J. (2017), *Kingsway Academy to close over PFI costs* [Online]. Available at: <http://schoolsweek.co.uk/academy-facing-crippling-21-million-pfi-costs-will-now-close/> [Accessed: 31 July 2018].

European Investment Bank (2015), *School Upgrade Extraordinary Programme* [Online]. Available at: <http://www.eib.org/projects/pipelines/pipeline/20140506> [Accessed: 31 July 2018].

European Investment Bank (2016), *Italy: “La Buona Scuola”: an additional EUR 530m in EIB loans for school buildings* [online]. Available at: <http://www.eib.org/infocentre/press/releases/all/2016/2016-301-la-buona-scuola-500-milioni-in-piu-per-i-mutui-bei-destinati-alledilizia-scolastica.htm> [Accessed: 31 July 2018].

Eurostat (2017), Government finance and EDP statistics, in Eurostat [Online]. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/government-finance-statistics/statistics-illustrated> [Accessed: 31 July 2018].

Facer, K. (2013), *The problem of the future and the possibilities of the present in education research*, “International Journal of Educational Research” [Online], 61135-61143.

Finch, P. (2015), *Letter from London: Predicting the future is an architectural condition*, “The Architects’ Journal”, 241 (10), p. 16.

Franklin, G. et al. (2012), *England’s Schools 1962-88: A thematic study*. [Online]. Available at: http://services.english-heritage.org.uk/ResearchReportsPdfs/033-2012WEB_1.pdf.

Friesen, N. (2013), *Educational Technology and the “New Language of Learning”: Lineage and Limitations*, in N. Selwyn, K. Facer (eds.), *The Politics of Education and Technology: Conflicts, Controversies, and Connections*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 21-38.

Fulcher, M. (2011), *Gove: Richard Rogers won’t design your school* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/home/gove-richard-rogers-wont-design-your-school/8610768.article> [Accessed: 31 July 2018].

Gallo, P. (2011), *Progettare l'emergenza scuola*, “Costruire in laterizio”, 142, xvii-xx.

Gandin, L. A. (2017), *Connecting with the Past* [Presentation], Schools of Tomorrow: 100 Years of Now, 5 June 2017, Berlin.

Grek, S. (2014), *OECD as a site of coproduction: European education governance and the new politics of ‘policy mobilization’*, “Critical Policy Studies” [Online], 8 (3), pp. 266-281.

- Hooks, B. (2003), *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*, New York, Routledge.
- House of Commons Education and Skills Committee (2007), *Sustainable Schools: Are we Building Schools for the Future?* [Online]. Available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmeduski/140/140.pdf> [Accessed: 31 July 2018].
- Jacob, S. (2015), *Failure to invest in where we manufacture society is a dereliction of duty* [Online]. Available at: <http://www.architectural-review.com/view/failure-to-invest-in-where-we-manufacture-society-is-a-dereliction-of-duty/8689644.article> [Accessed: 31 July 2018].
- Katz, M. B. (1987), *Reconstructing American Education*, Cambridge (MA), Harvard University Press.
- Leaman, A. et al. (2010), *Building evaluation: practice and principles*, "Building Research & Information" [Online], 38 (5), pp. 564-577.
- Lüchinger, A. (1981), *Structuralism in Architecture and Urban Planning - Strukturalismus in Architektur und Stadtebau - Structuralisme en architecture et urbanisme*, Stuttgart, Kraemer Stuttgart.
- Lyotard, J.-F. (1984), *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- Mahony, P. et al. (2011), *'Building Schools for the Future': reflections on a new social architecture*, "Journal of Education Policy" [Online], 26 (3), pp. 341-360.
- Massey, D. (2005), *For Space*, London, SAGE.
- Medd, D. (2009), *A Personal Account: School Design 1920s - 1970s*, Unpublished.
- Moore, R. (2013), *Why We Build*, London, Picador.
- OECD (2006), *21st Century Learning Environments*.
- OECD (n.d.), *What we do and how* [Online]. Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/about/whatwedoandhow/> [Accessed: 31 July 2018].
- Parker, J., Cahill, D. (2017), *The retreat from neoliberalism that was not: Australia's Building the Education Revolution*, "Australian Journal of Political Science" [Online], 52 (2), pp. 257-271.
- Partnerships for Schools (2009), *Schools' Strategy for Change: Guidance for schools and local authorities*. [Online]. Available at: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100208213524/http://www.partnershipsforschools.org.uk/documents/SSfC_guidance_June_09.doc [Accessed: 31 July 2018].
- Scott, J. C. (1998), *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, New Haven, Yale University Press.
- The Architects' Journal (2015), *#GREATSCHOOLS: Think Tank* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/>

business/greatschools-think-tank/8687251.article [Accessed: 31 July 2018].

Williams, F. (2017), *Finding the beauty in bureaucracy: public service and planning*, in R. Brown et al. (eds.) *Making good - shaping places for people*, 2017, Centre for London [Online]. Available at: https://www.centreforlondon.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/CFLJ5081_collection_essay_placemaking_0217_WEB-1.pdf [Accessed: 31 July 2018].

Woolner, P. et al. (2005), *School Building Programmes: Motivations, Consequences and Implications*, "CfBT, Research and Development" [Online]. Available at: <http://128.240.233.197/cflat/news/DCReport.pdf>.