

## **INTERDEPENDENCY AND THE INDIVIDUAL! SOCIALISATION AS A FORMAL LEARNING CONSTRUCT**

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One of the enduring and memorable properties and qualities of the 'unique situational laboratory' of design studio as a learning environment (Travar and Radford, 2003) is its ability to support and foster social interaction. As such, together with the opportunity for collaboration and sharing, socialisation serves as a significant contributory component and stimulant of learning (Parnell, 2001), at least informally. Indeed it is argued that the most significant attribute of design studio is the culture that it develops, as it is this, propagated by the learning environment, that acquires lasting significance (Koch et al, 2002). From a pedagogic perspective, therefore, the social dynamic of studio is deemed crucial. Additionally, interaction in studio facilitates the development of mutual emotional and morale support, and in the face of duress or adversity the social mechanisms appear to act as support structures founded on interdependence and camaraderie between students. The developing culture, which Thomas Fisher describes as a 'fraternity' culture (1999) cultivates bonds between individuals that can be very powerful and frequently endure over the course of a lifetime.

However, a considerable body of literature has developed over the last 20 years that challenges some of the habituated behaviours and rituals that are commonly associated with studio, and which can inadvertently run counter to educational theory. For example, despite its inherent social properties and reliance on discourse, the learning process typically introduces 'power asymmetries' that suppress the individual (Dutton, 1999), and offers limited recognition of the individual in terms of experience and perspective (Webster, 2003). Instead, the collective educational model has traditionally been more of a tool of normalisation and professional acculturation in relation to values, beliefs, and behaviours, as well as skills.

With a few exceptions such as the 'review' or 'crit' process, interdependent or peer learning has tended to occur through informal interaction, enabled by studio but remaining relatively unstructured. However, a number of educators have begun to explore methods for the structured incorporation of socialised learning into formal pedagogical constructs. Taking Piaget's

constructivism and Vygotsky's socio-cultural notion of 'proximal development' as the theoretical underpinnings of studio enables the development of pedagogical frameworks for formalised interdependent learning. The aim is primarily to release latent potential within studio, thereby further enhancing its potency as a learning environment. This paper presents pedagogic development being undertaken at the School of Architecture in Aberdeen, Scotland, that seeks to enhance discourse through use of peer learning as the principal pedagogic structure, as well as introducing methods of learning that embrace the diversity represented by the student body as a rich and hitherto under-exploited resource for learning.

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