Form follows friction?
Friction follows form?

Université Libanaise
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Theory first

- Artefacts as a symptom / mirror / effect of social conditions
- Artefacts as agents / mediators / causes of social conditions
- Example: A story of a door

Theory first

Technical Social

Door closer Technical Social Draught

Theory first

Door closer Technical Social Wedge

Theory first
Theory first

Sensor  Technical  Social  Wedge

Sensor  Technical  Social  Uninvited guests

Theory first

Mediator / Cause / Agent

Chip card  Technical  Social  Uninvited guests

Mirror / Effect / Symptom

The urban environment as mirror …
The urban environment as mirror …

- Conceptual tools from STS (Science and Technology Studies)
  - Controversy
  - Interpretive flexibility
  - Social groups
  - “Closure”
  - Technological somnambulism

The urban environment as mediator …
Form follows friction?
Friction follows form?
The urban environment as mediator …

- Conceptual tools from STS
  - Scripts (Akrich)
  - Programmes / Antiprogrammes; Delegation (Latour)
  - Agendas; Outsourcing or ex-bodying virtue (Brand)
- Environmental Psychology
  - Affordances (Gibson)
  - Behaviour setting (Baker)
- CPTED (Newman)

Example

Stewartstown Road Regeneration Project
Belfast

The urban environment as mediator …

- Smell of social engineering, determinism, manipulation, behaviourism
- Need for more nuanced conceptual tools:
  - Behaviour-petal versus Behaviour-fugal
  - Enforcing versus Enabling
  - Corporeal versus Symbolic

The urban environment as mediator …

- Corollary:
  - … can “do” something
  - … has agency
  - … can accentuate as well as alleviate the social practices of conflict
Right-wing extremism
Berlin
Demonstrating the presence of alternative discourses

Demonstrating the presence of ordinariness

Providing harmless distraction

Providing safe havens

Building resilience
Facilitating friendly encounters

Ethno-religious (de-)polarisation
Beirut
• Current research field trip
  • Elite interviews
  • Participatory photo-documentation & mental mapping
• Need for more research (Ph.D. opportunities)
• Results to be exhibited

Beirut

Conclusions
• Design cannot solve conflicts but ...
• Design must not be neglected in reconciliation efforts
• Design can be the nucleus of discussions about reconciliation
• Design process at least as important as content of design
• We certainly cannot “build” peace just with clever design
• But:
  • People with the power to determine the shape of the material urban fabric can make it harder to execute atrocities (CPTED)
  • People who genuinely want peace can & should ask how the urban environment can be enrolled in their efforts

Speculations
• From Belfast via Berlin to Mostar, Nicosia, … Beirut?
Building reconciliation
People, bricks and steel as peace builders

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For further information visit: www.sed.manchester.ac.uk/architecture/research/radicalisation/

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