Abstract
The Leverhulme Trust - a Charitable Trust - makes awards for the support of research and education. In assessing applications for funding, the Trust refers to a set of criteria which reflect its own particular values and the aspiration to maintain what it sees as a ‘distinctive role within the current research funding landscape’ (Leverhulme Trust, 2015) In particular the board values research proposals which:

- Reflect an individual’s personal vision, aspiration, or intellectual curiosity
- Take appropriate risks in setting and pursuing research objectives
- Enable a refreshing departure from established patterns of working – either for the individual, or for the discipline
- Transcend disciplinary boundaries.

The Trust is therefore associated with research that takes risks and challenges normative perspectives and methods – a context which arguably offers a kind of research U-Topos, highly conducive to ‘alternative making of values’. One of the Trust’s current research project grants is supporting a three year study (2013-16) based at the University of Sheffield’s School of Architecture, exploring interactions between children and spatial designers in the design process. The research focuses on documenting and understanding process, rather than product, and the minutiae of the
interactions/dialogue between children and adult designers in the design conversation. The study asks what designers learn from their interactions with children in this process and importantly, what is the impact on both the design process and on the designers themselves, of working with children. At its heart, this is a study about the process of valuing difference as well as building understanding of differing values.

This paper seeks to provoke discussion, first about the focus of research itself – who is involved in the process of (re)making values and in what ways and through what mechanisms are the values of design practice thereby shaped? And second, discussion about the politics and structures within which research itself is shaped and ‘procured’ – what are the necessary conditions (including the values of funding bodies themselves) for research approaches and processes which resist reductive cultures of measurement and instead support ‘cooperative environments of knowledge, of creation and invention’? We will draw on the findings of our Leverhulme-funded research, following interviews with spatial designers about their experiences of working with children and four ‘live’ case studies (Englandx2, Germany and Greece) in which architects are communicating directly with children during the design of different settings (2 schools, 1 restaurant, 1 woodland shelter). We will discuss emergent themes to suggest that the process of ‘Worlding’ is facilitated by a sense of being and acting ‘together’ (cf Sennett, 2012) in design – a notion valued by children and designers alike. We will describe how this sense of ‘togetherness’ is experienced and understood by the participants, with strong connections to both reciprocal learning and also thinking /valuing through making. The paper concludes by proposing that acting ‘together’ in creative process can support a transversal approach (see Fielding, 2008), which sustains diversity (ways of seeing, language, priorities, interpretations) and in turn offers conditions ripe for the speculative, reciprocal and cooperative working involved in Worlding.

Keywords: research funding culture, child-designer collaboration, worldling, together, design practice values

Key references