arq (2024), **28.1**, 3. © The Author(s), 2025. Published by Cambridge University Press.
doi: 10.1017/S1359135524000198

Shaping bureaucracies for building

The bureaucratic edifices of architectural practice regularly determine what architects can design and build. Particularly in the UK context of **arq**'s editorial home, types of contract form, the achievement of building product warranties, institutional clients' standard specifications and the availability of CAD and BIM plugins, for example, exert design agency over projects. The normative structures of professional practice – like standard contracts, forms of specification, and bills of quantities – can be highly effective tools for establishing responsibilities across project teams and for getting buildings built. But architects increasingly bemoan how they seem to diminish space for design creativity. In response, some have sought to design novel bureaucracies for building alongside the projects themselves. How might it be possible to rethink processes of building to better shape their outcomes? This issue of **arq** addresses a handful of historical and contemporary examples.

Ralph Erskine Arkitektkontor's project for a 2,000-unit housing estate in Byker, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK (1969–82) was the result of an unusually long and complex design process. Julián Varas goes to the archive to examine procedures the architects employed to soften the impact of radical community transformation (pp. 18–33). Laurence Heindryckx, Tom Broes, and Michiel Dehaene examine how architects can gain agency over the city by working as developers, exploring the work of Jean-Florian Collin in interwar Brussels (pp. 35–48). Dulmini Perera recalls the 'intermedia' practice of Annetta Pedretti (1980–2018), particularly her attempts to work with 'implicit ordering' as a form of resistance against oppression (pp. 49–62). In the 1970s and 1980s, Christopher Alexander famously sought to systematise design and construction – through the book *A Pattern Language* – into a sequence of patterns enabling people to self-build architectures of 'wholeness': a quality he imagined as 'more beautiful and alive'. Michael Dawes and Michael Ostwald set out a method for measuring 'wholeness', testing Alexander's assertion that organic environments are more whole than mechanistic ones (pp. 63–75). Gianni Talamini, Charlie Xue, and Zongqi Wang discuss student self-build projects that test the potential of bamboo construction: an approach that reinstates a physical connection with materials and manual construction skills in highly urbanised Hong Kong (pp. 4–17).

THE EDITORS

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135524000198 Published online by Cambridge University Press