

can absorb. The Internet is one of the latest; technically this is no longer the latest thing, and yet society has hardly even begun to adapt to the new ways of communicating and doing business that it enables. Buildings used to be built for a much more stable and predictable society. It is simply no longer possible to think in this kind of way. The building is probably one of the most permanent artefacts we use in our daily lives. Our cars, clothes, books, computers, televisions and most other belongings get out of date many times during a lifetime, but we still think of buildings as having longevity. The very phrase 'bricks and mortar' implies permanence and reliability. Invest in bricks and mortar and you will be safe, was the motto.

So we have a wonderful paradox here. On the one hand we have learned to be precise about time, and in fact we can manipulate it technically – we have slow-motion replays on television, and we can fly faster than the speed of sound. Marshall McLuhan's global village has arrived and, as he warned, our only certainty is change. Yet we persist with these lumbering leviathans called buildings. Architects still persist with the notion that they can be designed to work not just at the moment they are built but well beyond. We now even view historical buildings this way. Our whole concept of conservation implies some 'golden moment' to which a building should be restored, a complete and concrete freezing of time in space when the building was perfect. However, this hardly bears any serious examination. Most important buildings were adapted well before they were finished. The huge cathedrals and palaces of the cultural heritage trails of Europe were rarely planned as complete entities, and were often built by many generations who continually adapted the construction to the needs of society and development of technology. As Jeremy Till has pointed out, it was the modern movement that indulged this paradox to a level of absurdity that we still fail to recognize (Till 2000). Such buildings are monuments of functionalist dogma in which the whole structure expresses a precisely known way of living, working and playing. Of course they can never really work in the sense they were intended to. We have evidence of this every day of our lives as we struggle to use them, and yet the myth remains deeply rooted in our unconscious acceptance of functionalism. Till has suggested that we need a concept of 'thick time' to deal with this paradox. He relies on James Joyce's *Ulysses* as a way of explaining the idea:

*Ulysses* invokes a sense of time not as a series of successive slices of instants, but as an expanded present. Thick Time. It is a present that gathers the past and pregnantly holds the future.

For Till this 'thick time' is the time of everyday life, of the real experience of life as we live it. How this should be used to create a new approach to architecture is only hinted at in his essay. He argues that