

developers are particularly interested in art for its own sake. The example of Lord Peter Palumbo, the commercial property developer who has also served as Chairman of the Arts Council, is surely the exception whose very noteworthiness proves the contrary general rule. And even if this were not the case, most major property developers themselves have shareholders, who invest their money in the expectation of profit, and will stop supporting the developer's very existence as a developer if acceptable profits are not produced.

To an important degree, then, the resources needed to construct buildings are only made available with strings attached. In their hearts, most people – including artist-architects – know this perfectly well. It was these strings which tangled up the efforts even of the heroic Howard Roark in Ayn Rand's novel, causing him such distress that he blew up his botched creation in a rage. But real-life architects have mortgages to pay and children to feed like anyone else. Like most of us, they would probably come round in the end to doing what their patrons dictate, without Howard's heroics.

On the face of it, all this supports the idea of the developer as master of all the actors in the development process; which offers one way of explaining, for example, why so many different architects are involved in producing similar buildings. If all office developers (say) have the same profit-orientated objectives, and if it is mostly these objectives which determine the forms of office blocks, then it is not surprising that so many office buildings are so much alike.

In practice, however, things cannot be so simple, if only because there are other contenders for a 'master' role. For example, the idea of the planner as 'master' seems to be widely held amongst architects.

In the end, though, this 'master and servant' problematic is no more convincing than the idea of the heroic form-giver. This is largely because it ignores the problems which face even the most powerful actors when they try to control the work of all the specialised experts, such as architects, who are involved in the modern development process. The idea that 'whoever pays the piper calls the tune' is unconvincing in this situation, because building projects are not at all like tunes. Tunes, after all, are predictable and are known in advance to those who pay the piper, whilst buildings are often one-offs, and in any case are always on unique sites. Even when buildings themselves are standardised (as, for example, in many speculative housing estates) the overall layout of each 'estate' is unique. Patrons, therefore, cannot know exactly what they will be paying for, in

advance of some design process carried out by design experts.

As with the 'heroic form-maker' approach, the widespread nature of the idea that 'those with the most power always win' probably owes a great deal to its ideological role in the form-production process; it absolves those actors who lack access to economic or political power from struggling too hard to achieve whatever they believe to be the best form for the situation in hand. Though sometimes a mite depressing, this makes the working lives of relatively powerless actors a great deal less stressful and, no doubt, more efficient for developers in economic terms.

If patrons cannot know, in advance of the design process, exactly what they will be paying for, they can nevertheless know whom they are paying for, when they buy the services of professional advisers in the marketplace. Clearly, patrons are most likely to buy the services of those whose track records demonstrate a willingness and aptitude for working in the patron's interest. As Phillippo advises, in a guide for developers: 'It is not advisable to try to change the style of an architect; but to find an architect who in the opinion of the market analysts is in demand.'⁵

At this point, then, it begins to look as though the limitations of the 'master and servant' approach might be overcome if we adopt the perspective of the 'market signals' problematic, according to which the various actors in the development process are kept in line not by brute force, but by market signals which indicate the sorts of services and forms which patrons are willing to fund. How far can this can take us?

We can best explore this approach by starting from the position of design professionals setting out their stalls in the marketplace, competing with each other to sell their services. One important way of improving cost effectiveness in professional work is through a process of increasing specialisation, in which broad and complex tasks are split down into ever-narrower parts. For a given cost, this enables a greater degree of specialised expertise to be applied to each given aspect of the development process, to the benefit of whoever is in a position to buy the services concerned. The market process therefore supports the emergence of an ever more complex and specialised division of labour in the production of urban space.

Particular professionals, with their particular specialised skills, build up track records, for which they are hired (or not). Market signals, broadcast through the professional media, enable their competitors to