

# Intercultural interaction in architectural education

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with Stefanie Rhodes and Jen Ng



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## Introduction

### Why the theme Intercultural Interactions?

Schools of architecture like the architecture profession itself have an interest in remaining separate, exclusive and elitist. This separation preserves status, protects incomes and builds careers.

Ever since architectural education became part of universities in the early twentieth century a tension has emerged between the instinct of students as engaged citizens and their more formalized duties as academics and proto-professionals. Students enter schools as part of the wider society around them and over the course of five years become part of the much narrower society of architects. In making this journey students can become distanced from their roots and their original ethical and political motives. Students can also begin to lack confidence in dealing with what they perceive as ‘real’ people rather than by implication the ‘unreal’ people who inhabit schools of architecture.

This distance and fear of the ‘real’ plays itself out in the type of projects set in architecture schools and the way students respond. Projects tend to prioritise the formally heroic and the visionary over engagement with the compromised reality so many of the students come from, live in and know well. Students quickly learn that formal gymnastics, visual sophistication and innovation are the most reliable routes to success. Those who reject this orthodoxy are seen as dull, unsophisticated or too rooted in everyday practice and are often accused of not making use of the freedom offered by education.

However, over the past decade students have questioned this orthodoxy. They have demanded that the comfortable separation between their hopes as citizens and their education as professionals are no longer in conflict. This has led to the development in schools of architecture of ways of teaching that attempt to bridge the gap between their students’ motives as citizens and professionals. Part of this move has been to set projects in situations or places where students are unable to remain neutral. Projects in areas subject to social deprivation and political change demand that students connect their actions with their ethical and moral values.

This focus on individual action has been matched by institutional action. Schools have established mechanisms for supporting work that crosses cultural and geographical boundaries. These range from ways of supporting work with and for local communities to work abroad in developing countries. The concentration on working locally has lead to a new recognition of the potential of schools as regional forces and resources. Outreach programmes, live projects, partnerships and consultancy often supported by semi autonomous projects offices are becoming more common. In parallel work abroad with

academic partners, NGO’s and governments has become a major part of many schools and is growing in popularity and impact.

Since the Intercultural Interactions conversation began within SCHOSA (the Standing Conference of Heads of Schools of Architecture) three years ago much has changed. There have been profound changes in society, practice and education. Within this new reality there are opportunities and threats.

The Government’s localism agenda needs skilled intermediaries capable of focusing and articulating the competing needs of local communities. Precisely the skills nurtured by many of the projects contained in this book. Less positively as we enter a period of increasing unrest and social division in Britain, architects are uniquely placed to act as compassionate advocates for the marginalized. In many ways the skills developed in places of deprivation and unrest abroad now need to be applied closer to home.

However, architectural education faces changes that will make it increasingly difficult to prepare students to fulfill these roles. Changes to funding threaten to disenfranchise students who fear the level of debt that will now be imposed upon them. In many cases it is these students from diverse backgrounds who would be most effective in addressing the social challenges facing Britain.

The financial pressures faced by architecture schools and their less privileged students will force a rethink of how an architectural education is delivered. Again many of the strategies contained in this book pre-empt this change. Students working abroad, students working on live projects and a resurgence in part-time study all point to a more fluid relationship between the different cultures surrounding education.

Schools engaged in these projects have not chosen an easy option. They face challenges beyond a change in teaching methodology, as administrative structures, assessment methods and responsibilities have to be reconsidered.

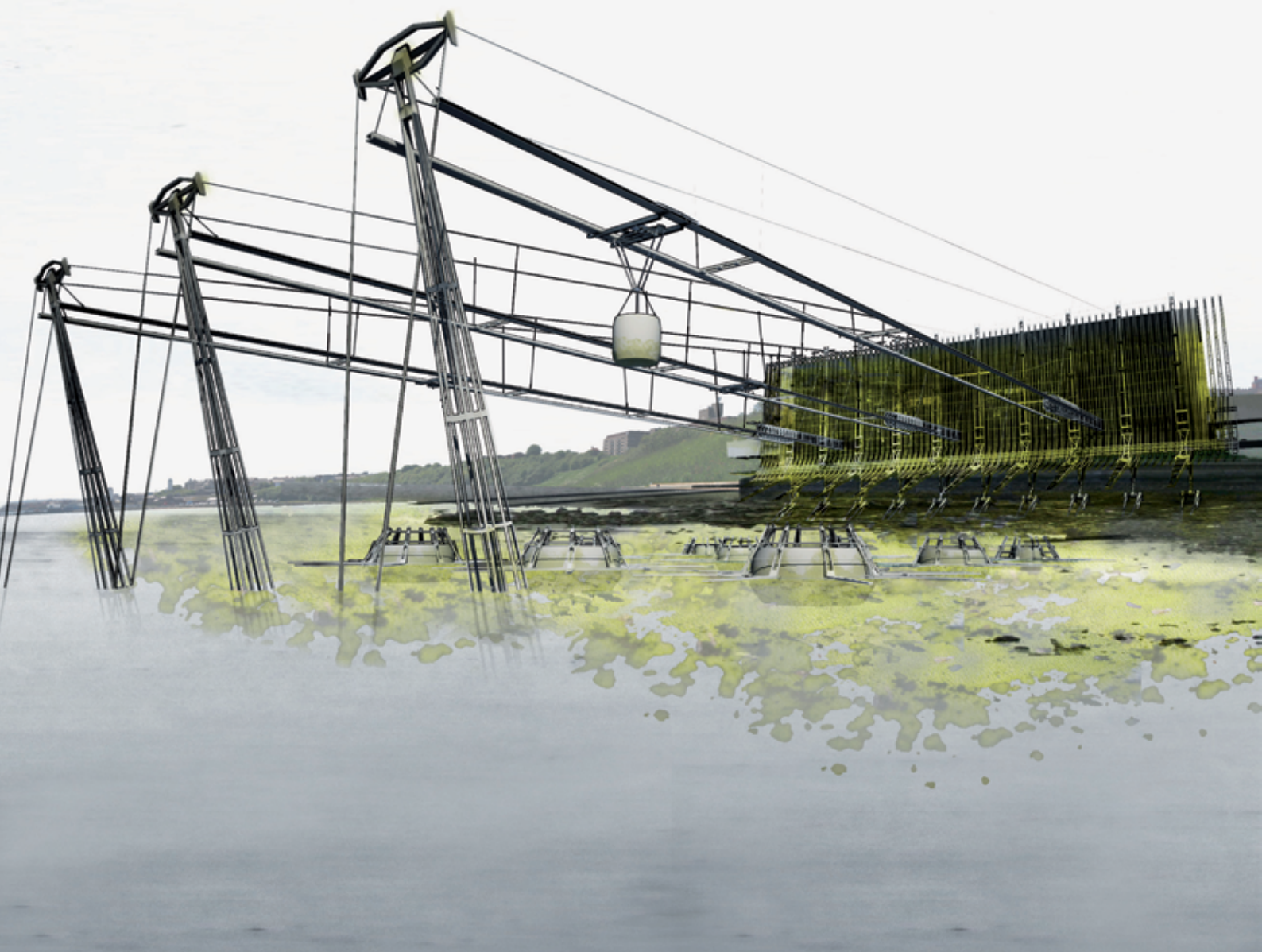
This publication is a guide to the scope and variety of this work, from live projects, to enabling mechanisms and supporting research. It is an argument for schools of architecture to engage with the society they are a part of and serve, and to support students in building upon their personal values to shape their career and the future of architectural practice.

Professor Robert Mull



## 1

# Regional engagement at Northumbria: a synergy between research and teaching



## School of the Built and Natural Environment, Northumbria University

Text by Peter Beacock & Peter Holgate

Northumbria is a regional university, set within a landscape of diverse urban centres, rural settlements, and managed and wild countryside. The University is located in Newcastle upon Tyne, a city with a long history still legible within its built form, and with a strong maritime and industrial heritage. Culturally it is diverse, with arguably stronger links to the north and east than to the south. Economically, its traditional industries are in decline, and the region has some of the poorest communities in the county.

Historically, the region has maintained a distinct character in its architecture; late seventeenth century brick architecture showed the influence of trade links with the Low Countries; the nineteenth century work of John Dobson in Newcastle city centre adapted the principles of his mentor John Soane to an 'architecture born of place' (Faulkner & Greg, 2001). In the late twentieth century, the situated internationalism of Ryder and Yates developed a distinctly northern feel (Carrol, 2009). Ryder and Yates were foremost of a group of prominent architects working within the regional context, and the housing development at Byker by Erskine and Gracie demonstrated the power of a deep engagement with the community. The region has however, suffered, like many others, from a decline and loss of identity. Many early twenty-first century speculative developments (generally by firms from outwith the region) show no more than a superficial respect for the existing fabric of the region, manifesting Buchanan's predictions of 1984:

*A precious harmony built up over ages between buildings and setting, is now rapidly being destroyed and replaced by chaotic and dislocated sameness* (Buchanan, 1984)

There has been, however, a significant response from the region's Universities to embed regional identity and engagement as a key part of their mission. This strategy informs research, knowledge transfer, and teaching activities within the academic community.

These aims and their associated relationships to social, cultural and artistic interactions have become fundamental to the development of the architecture programmes at Northumbria, with an ambition to produce graduates whose work engages with, and is informed by, local context, and architecture that makes a positive, multivalent contribution to the region. This approach has emerged from formal and informal encounters, through research and reflection on pedagogy, and from the interests of the architecture teaching team. These aims have been guided, for example, by interaction with key protagonists such as Steven Moore:

*Newcastlers told me that they aspire to become a region which we eventually were able to distinguish from a province. The difference we agreed upon is that a region is one unique place among peers of a different sort whereas a province exists only in relation to some distant point of authority ... Regionalism in the sense we proposed ... is both politically and culturally democratic whereas provincialism is hierarchical ... this progressive kind of regionalism is not about discovering tribal purity or the truth about one's place bound essence ... rather, progressive regionalism is about constructing life-enhancing futures.* (Moore, 2008)

Thus, the central ethos of architectural design at Northumbria has developed into contextual studies informing place; a multi layered basis for inquiry, within a physically and culturally diverse region, delivered through a main vehicle of regional engagement. This requires the student design enquiry to be initiated through research. Scholarship underpins teaching activities to ensure that learning is not 'provincial' or parochial, but is universally transferable. Staff members' research



Grey Street, Newcastle



Retail World Team Valley, Gateshead



interests inform teaching. For example, studies on the architecture and culture of Tyneside led to the publication of a book, contributions to academic papers and two local exhibitions (Fawcett, 2006; RIBA North East, 2010); and doctoral research into the framework of place-making (Radfar, 2009), has generated data for both staff and students. Research informed teaching ensures currency and focus.

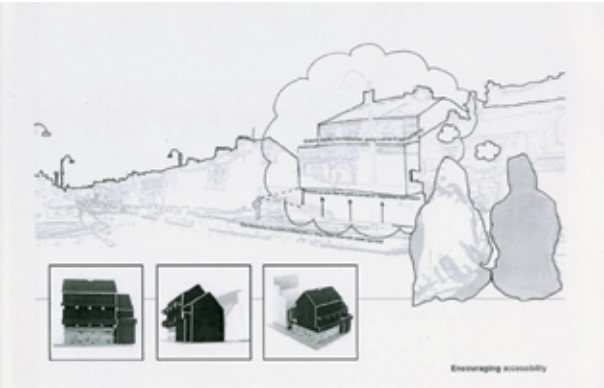
The undergraduate programme

The programme develops an understanding of physical and social context that informs design process from the first year. This interest in projects with a connection to place extends to sustainability and materiality. The awareness and development of proposals in context lends authenticity to the process, and depth to the theoretical underpinning of the projects.

*Regionalism, despite traditionally being used to describe, define and isolate networks of places and spaces, can provide a rhetorical basis for making claims about how spaces and places are connected to spatially and conceptually broader patterns of meaning. In a time when the breadth of crisis can be so vividly revealed to us, critical regionalism can be a way to assert what the relationships among places should be.* (Powell, 2007)

Studio-based design projects are designed to stimulate imaginative responses to current and authentic issues concerning the region. Design projects account for half of the undergraduate programme, and are underpinned by taught modules with assignments constructively aligned to studio work. The key benefits of this approach to student learning are:

- contextual awareness: making the students aware of architecture’s interrelationships with locale, society and climate; encouraging students to position themselves with respect to the responsibilities, opportunities and impact of the subject
- accessible sites: ensuring familiarity with the historical and physical contexts; enabling return visits to promote deeper reflection, understanding, awareness, engagement and research; mitigating against spiralling travel costs for students



Lisa Hanking, Shields Road One Stop Shop, Byker, 2007/08

- authenticity to process: encouraging engagement with authorities, agencies and NGOs; providing insight into the mechanisms and processes of development and procurement; developing the student as a ‘critical practitioner’ in the subject area
- engagement with local practice: establishing links between student projects and live projects; supporting teaching and learning by architects, consultants, clients, and sponsors of live projects.
- engagement with local communities: enabling interaction and dialogue with communities; encouraging awareness and debate with real-life issues; activating the potential for real change to perceptions, aspirations and policy
- meaningful engagement: developing sensitive, authentic projects with a considered attitude to context at many levels: social, historical, physical, theoretical, aesthetic and cultural.

These approaches to design are progressively introduced from the first year onwards, with the students developing an understanding of the increasingly complex interactions. In the third year these are explored in two projects, each concentrating on different aspects of contextual inquiry; the first project urban based, dealing with communities and social issues, and the second landscape based engaged with historical narratives.

Case studies

Shields Road One Stop Shop, Byker

This project was to provide a new ‘one stop shop’ in a deprived area to the east of the city centre, and gave the students opportunities to develop links with community groups and local residents in order to address social issues and develop schemes with programmes to meet real needs. Although at this stage in their architectural development, the solutions may not be completely realistic, the students derive real benefit from such an engagement, and it has a significant impact on their developing attitude to the design process:

*I think the ADM course really did influence my career direction. It made me realise that good design couldn’t be achieved by students working in silo ... I think the future of architectural education should move towards a multi-disciplinary approach, where the projects are defined by a separate real life ‘client’ and ‘user group’ for the student to engage with to involve more real life collaboration.* (Lisa Hanking)

Lindisfarne Gospels Exhibition Centre

The second project in third year is a rural, landscape based scheme which engages to a greater extent with historical narratives. Students are given greater freedom than in the first project to choose an appropriate site, and to develop the programmatic detail of the scheme. This focus on the cultural and historic contexts of architecture often allows powerful poetic responses to site and brief.



Matt Drury, Lindisfarne Gospels Exhibition Centre, 2008/09

In this project, the remote and beautiful island of Lindisfarne, off the coast of Northumberland near Berwick upon Tweed, provided a spectacular physical setting, and a rich cultural narrative. The proposal was to provide a museum to house the Lindisfarne Gospels, brought back to the place of their creation. The schemes have generated much local and national interest, and have helped to reignite the longstanding debate about a home for the gospels in the north. Matt’s proposal, a demonstration of historical narrative located in place, won the 2010 Northern Design prize and was featured on the BBC national web-site.

The MArch programme

Whilst the design projects at undergraduate level have an emphasis on a response to context and the ‘spirit of place’, at MArch level, the intellectual agenda is for a much deeper enquiry. Projects are based on research and a thorough investigation of broader physical, cultural, social, technological and theoretical issues.

The diagram on the following page illustrates a student’s approach to identifying the multiple problems associated with the regeneration of North Shields, a settlement at the mouth of the Tyne, once flourishing from fishing and shipbuilding, and with a wealth of history and sense of community, but in now in serious decline. This diagram was part of an environmental report, demonstrating the development of an holistic interpretation of ‘sustainable development’, which has increasingly driven student investigations. Proposals are based on analysis at a very broad level, not just carbon reduction technologies for the built fabric.

In the first year this approach is introduced through both group and individual investigation. In the short history of the programme, students have engaged in activities that have encompassed studies of regeneration proposals in the Newcastle suburbs; proposals which informed the development of the Stephenson quarter, a rundown historic area of Newcastle, and a study of Morpeth, a market town to the north of Newcastle, where students proposed progressive changes over the next ten, twenty and fifty years to demonstrate the potential for developing a sustainable community.

Morpeth was chosen as the study vehicle in response to a concern about the general pressures on such communities which are destroying their identity and response to place, and also to specific problems highlighted by recent serious flooding in the centre of the town. Proposals by the students took a long term view, and suggested removal and relocation of flood risk housing, reintroduction of water meadows as ‘buffer zone’ parkland beside the river, and integrating allotments to allow increased local food production. This met with a very positive response from the community involved, and culminated in an exhibition in the farmer’s market, to great local interest. There are proposals to use the students’ study as source material for the town’s future unitary development plan.

The major project in second year is an individual student led investigation, predominantly set within the region. The design response may critically evaluate and improve upon the existing, or propose considered alternatives to help reinvigorate the location of study, and encourages a variety of speculative and imaginative approaches by the students. Areas for enquiry are selected by staff, and are based on the need for imaginative development to support regeneration. Study areas have included the ‘Stephenson Quarter’, and the east Pilgrim street development area, both in central Newcastle; North Shields, at the mouth of the Tyne; Redcar, a former fishing community and Victorian seaside resort to the south of the river Tees, now badly affected by the closure of the Corus steel work; and Newburn, a former mining community on the river Tyne, on the fringe of the Newcastle/Gateshead conurbation.

The process of developing proposals is based on research and analysis at many levels, and founded on



Exhibition, Farmers’ Market, Morpeth, 2010



contextual awareness, with the development of narrative being key to informing the proposals. The two case studies demonstrate this approach.

Case studies

**Marine Renewable Energy Institute, North Shields**  
This investigation of North Shields concentrated on Smiths Dock, 30 acres of derelict and contaminated shipyard that dominates 500 meters of the town’s river front – a remnant of the industrial revolution that once set the Tyne at the forefront of British shipbuilding during the late 19th Century.  
Mark proposed an institute for renewable technologies to house research and development, educational and visitor facilities. The project reuses the existing fabric of the shipyard by sensitively placing the building within the largest of six dry docks, and the programme makes use of the skills in engineering manufacture that are still available in the community.

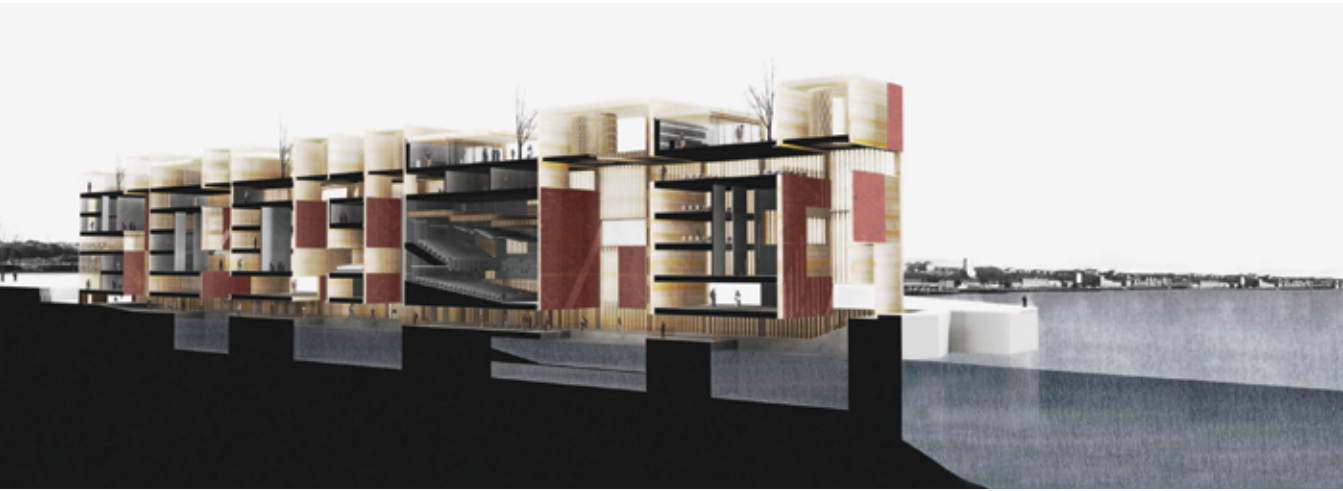
The project has been informed by its historical context, an abstract interpretation of the past that places form both physically and historically. With reference to proportion, repetition, material intensity, light, water and the experience of monumentality, the characteristics of past forms and atmospheres at Smiths Dock have been embodied in the realisation of a contemporary building

– acknowledging and remembering the legacy of ship building on the Tyne.  
The design project strives to counteract the ‘placelessness’ and lack of meaning that have degraded North Shields by referencing the contextual forces of its cultural heritage, thus restoring meaning, identity and a sense of place.

**Regenerative Landscapes, North Shields**  
The scheme is a marine ecology college, algae farm and fish hatchery positioned at the mouth of the River Tyne and is conceived in response to the need for a facility that addresses the ever-diminishing fish stocks in the North Sea, and the demise of the communities that rely on the fish stocks for income (see opening image on p.4). There has been commercial fishing from North Shields for over 1000 years but the industry has been in decline for a century, largely due to over-fishing, although climate change is now a contributing factor. Experts have warned that there may be as little as ten years before the stocks are completely exhausted. The proposal aims to replenish fish stocks by growing sprats and releasing them in the North Sea. Algae are farmed to feed plankton which in turn feeds the sprats. The fish hatchery is cross-programmed with a higher education facility for marine ecology as a potential outpost to one of the Northeast universities. Redundant fishermen would be re-employed to take the sprats out to sea, and

| ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES OF NORTH SHIELDS   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| PHYSICAL  | ENVIRONMENTAL   | SOCIAL  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Total Solar Exposure</li><li>• Distinct lack of biodiversity</li><li>• High Flood Risk</li><li>• Contaminated Land</li><li>• Poor Public Routes</li><li>• Unmanaged Car Parks</li><li>• Traffic Congestion</li><li>• Western Quay jetty in poor state of repair</li><li>• Poor maintenance of historic strcutures</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• High CO2 and green house gas emissions (see P11 2.7 Air Quality)</li><li>• High waste production levels (see P20 3.7 Recycling and waste disposal)</li><li>• Low recycling levels (see P21 3.6 Recycling and waste disposal)</li><li>• Large quantities of food imports</li><li>• Little composting of green biodegradables (see P20 3.7 Recycling and waste disposal)</li><li>• No local water catchment areas</li><li>• Reliance on Nation Grid services for Electricity, Gas and Water</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Diminishing Genius Loci</li><li>• Lack of a ‘Centre’</li><li>• Lack of ‘public and gathering space’</li><li>• Lots of dereliction and under occupancy</li><li>• Uncertainty over Fishing as the Industrial sector</li><li>• Diminishing site history and culture</li><li>• Lack of tourism</li><li>• Lack of local skilled workers</li><li>• Poor environment with fish offal and litter</li><li>• Poor quality of public amenities, bins, lighting, benches etc</li><li>• Poor evening economy due to lack of activity and poor nighttime street illumination</li><li>• No recent investment</li><li>• Lack of public facilities, sports centres, art galleries, medical centres etc</li></ul> |
|   |   |   |

Ben Kinch, Environmental Report, Professional Diploma year 2, 2008/09



Mark Todd, Marine Renewable Energy Institute, Professional Diploma year 2, 2008/09

other work would be generated in the maintenance of the hatchery, the algae farm and the general support of the University facility.

The project is borne out of discourse in relation to context and critical regionalism. The architectural language, scale and form recall the former industries: the coal staithes and conveyors, suspension structures across the river, shipbuilding, all technologies that have been a backdrop to the area and the communities on the river since Victorian times. The algae farm is a new language on the river, representative of a new era of environmentalism. The algae farm appears as a piece of land-art from the sea; there is the potential to subtly alter the building’s appearance by growing algae with different chromatic qualities.  
This advocacy of a student-centred approach which emphasises the importance of reflective practice within the philosophy of the programme, is exemplified by this project. Gavin won the 2009 AJ/3DReid Prize for the Best National Part II Project. The scheme was described as ‘an architectural tour de force that is connected to its social and geographical context’.

Some reflections

Architecture at Northumbria is a recent addition to a multi-disciplinary school of the built environment. The undergraduate programme was validated in 2004, and the diploma in 2009. The philosophy of contextual studies informing place, a multi layered basis for inquiry, delivered through a main vehicle of regional engagement, has permitted rapid development of a sophisticated, responsible approach to a meaningful architecture, within the context of research interests within the school and the wider university community. There are benefits to staff in giving a focus to research informed teaching, but there are also implications; there is a significant amount of work in finding and setting up appropriate project vehicles through the five years of study, that are appropriate to the

student’s development and which have a time scale that fits with the year’s programme. The logical development to encourage this work would be the setting up of a live project office to develop the links with local communities and identify appropriate projects.

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Opening image: Gavin Lowden, Regenerative Landscapes, 2008/09



# 2

## The Portsmouth Project Office

### School of Architecture, Portsmouth University

Text by Lorraine Farrelly

The School of Architecture at Portsmouth University has a strong connection regionally to both practice and education. It is part of a University that has a significant influence on the city, its population of 150,000 with a student community of 15,000 has an impact on its identity. Its strategy is to be part of the city as a campus university, the important civic buildings of the city blend with the architecture of the University, part of the same landscape. The central area of Portsmouth has new buildings the University has commissioned by architects including ABK, Ed Jones, Hawkins Brown, Penoyre and Prasad, Van Heyningen and Haward and Sir Colin Stansfield Smith. This legacy of new buildings within the city has extended the impact the University has to the skyline of the city. So the context is a university as part of a region, and part of the City, both interdependent.

As a result there are many development and architectural projects that are presented to the University for comment and advice, sometimes they are strategic, sometimes involving design advice. As a school of architecture, additionally there were approaches from potential clients who need direction or encouragement. The role of the University as an academic institution is to have a certain neutrality, which is essential to maintain, but it can have positive influence on the possibility for something to happen, to start a new direction to think around a problem.

#### Context

There are various ways a school of architecture can engage with the idea of regional development, to stage competitions for students to think outside the box, or to challenge aspects of planning development, restrictions that have been created by layers of bureaucracy and political necessity. Students can be encouraged to take a real problem and it can be framed by tutors to focus on a particular aspect of the curriculum. As educators we are always looking to ensure a design problem is challenging, sometimes the reality of a community problem can be more challenging than an abstract student design brief with no site and no client. This type of project of course must be balanced by more abstract architectural problems.

Having engaged with various regional partners in local development problems, the School wanted to try to develop some of these schemes further. The Project Office was established to respond to regional issues and possible architectural projects and to act as a catalyst where possible. It supports the client and establishes connections that can make the difference between

a project happening or not. It is not an architectural practice looking to compete with local architectural practices, in fact, the projects we have had so far have allowed us to work in partnership with local practice when we don't have the capacity or expertise to deliver or implement a scheme.

Our Project Office works to ensure that the connection to the School is paramount. The Office exists to enhance the experience of our students and staff and their connection to the practice of architecture. The idea of: 'Practice through Education, Education through Practice' has informed our choice of projects that we have engaged with.

The Project Office has taken many years to put into place. It is run with a management group which includes the Head and Deputy Head of School, Director of Research, a Project Manager and a member of the Research and Development office. There is a member of staff who manages the Office on a *pro rata* contract, he also teaches in the Department in studio, ensuring a connection back to the teaching within the School.

The Office started in November 2008 and currently has a range of projects from community participation events to strategic design projects. We work in collaboration with many groups across the community to identify possible student projects and also to suggest initiatives for new development possibilities across the region.

#### Curriculum engagement

Connections back to the curriculum for projects that don't have an academic timetable has taken a lot of organisation and planning, projects can't always start in October and finish in June, but we have made connections when useful for our students to participate in various stages of project development.

Our Part 2 architecture students are involved with a design project initiated by the Project Office with the possibility for some of them to extend their involvement as paid summer work as 'interns' employed and directed by the Project Office.

A new Part 2 Thesis Design Studio will be running over the next academic year with a 'real' project to reinvent the Zoo on the Isle of Wight. Some of our completed projects are listed below; they range in scale from strategic masterplans to interior fit outs.

Image left: Paul Cashin, Hilsea Lido Pool for the People





Niall Bird, Hilsea Lido Pool for the People

# Projects

## Hilsea Lido – pool for the people

A plan was developed by Portsmouth’s 2009/10 postgraduate architecture students to develop a 1930s open-air swimming pool on the outskirts of Portsmouth into a financially self-sustaining, year-round community venue. Hilsea Lido, which is owned by Portsmouth City Council (PCC), is now only opened for six weeks during the summer holidays and threatened with permanent closure. Therefore a local organisation ‘Hilsea Lido Pool for the People’ (HLPP) aims with the help of the Project Office to present a plan to PCC to save the lido.

This year-long project including on-site design charrettes, client reviews and entry into the Philip Webb Award, aimed to teach students how to work at both macro and micro scales, while still maintaining a close bond with the client.

The Project Office is now taking forward the project to the next design stages.  
Staff: Francis Graves, Martin Andrews

## Church projects

In June 2009 the Project Office and a small team of Erasmus students exhibited their design proposals to redevelop St Francis Church in Leigh Park, a community on the outskirts of Portsmouth.

The project was originally developed as part of the curriculum for Portsmouth’s postgraduate architecture students in collaboration with year one students on the Diploma in Architecture.

The Erasmus team, from the Trondheim School of Architecture in Norway and Thessalonike Aristotle University in Greece, also worked towards the Reverend’s brief to show how the site could be redeveloped to create open, welcoming and attractive facilities that could contribute to health and well-being in the community.

Staff: Martin Andrews

## Third Space

Working in collaboration with the University of Portsmouth Students’ Union and Estates Department, the Project Office and architects Design ACB have recently completed a new student zone within the campus called ‘The Third Space’. The concept was to create a space that exists between the formal library and the more informal University café.

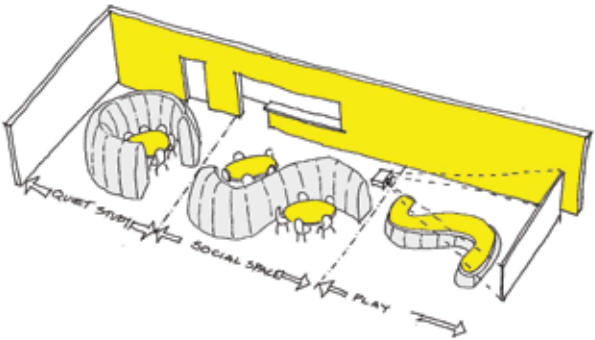
The development of this project started to raise questions regarding the social interaction of students and the environment they need to support their experience in the University. The project was initiated by the University and the initial concept was developed by architecture staff. The project was then implemented by a partner practice ACB Architects, who worked alongside the Project Office to project manage the scheme. It was completed in April 2010.

This project has informed the subject of a research paper written by the Project Office and Lorraine Farrelly, and presented at Innovative Spaces in Teaching and Learning conference in June 2010. The University are reviewing many more of their social spaces in response to this project.

Staff: Lorraine Farrelly, Martin Andrew

## National Trust

In March 2010 the Project Office and year two BA (Hons) Architecture students collaborated with the National Trust to produce models of Bembridge Fort located in Sandown on the Isle of Wight. Bembridge is a Victorian fort built between 1862 and 1867 which formed part of a ring of defences protecting the island and Portsmouth’s naval dockyards from the threat of a French invasion.



Lorraine Farrelly, Third Space, concept sketch



Lorraine Farrelly & ACB Architects, Third Space. Photo: Kevin Purdey

The nineteen students were given one week to work on this project, carrying out a site visit, surveying the existing fort and compiling research data. After creating high-quality computer-generated three-dimensional models of the existing buildings and landscape, the students made a series of detailed and accurate physical architectural models of Bembridge Fort. The models show the fort in context to the surrounding landscape and were produced on a specialist Computer Numerical Control (CNC) milling machine located in the Portsmouth School of Architecture.

Staff: Tod Wakefield, Martin Andrews

## Intern scheme

The Project Office’s inaugural interns programme in summer 2009 proved a great success, bringing design, presentation, leadership and time management skills to ten Portsmouth architecture students and design solutions to community clients. They were employed through the Project Office to give them some work experience as Part 1 students.

The South East Coastal Communities (SECC), which promotes partnership between higher education



Kahlid Saleh, St Francis Church



Kahlid Saleh, St Francis Church



establishments and community groups across the region, funded the programme and the Project Office coordinated and managed the student interns for twelve weeks during the summer vacation.

The interns were asked to create designs and visionary solutions for existing buildings and land owned by four local clients. They had to present their initial research and finished designs on set days in front of community stakeholders. With a fixed budget they produced postcards, banners, books, models, posters, websites and drawings for each client.

This project allowed the interns to develop an independent approach to design and practice management, working closely with 'real' clients on 'live' projects in a studio-based environment. Its success means another programme with SECC funding has taken place in summer 2010.

Staff: Nicola Crowson, Martin Andrews

### Future developments

The next stage of the Project Office will be to work further with the clients we have and build on the opportunities for our students. In particular the interns scheme managed by architecture staff has given our students the possibility to have some work experience in quite difficult economic times.

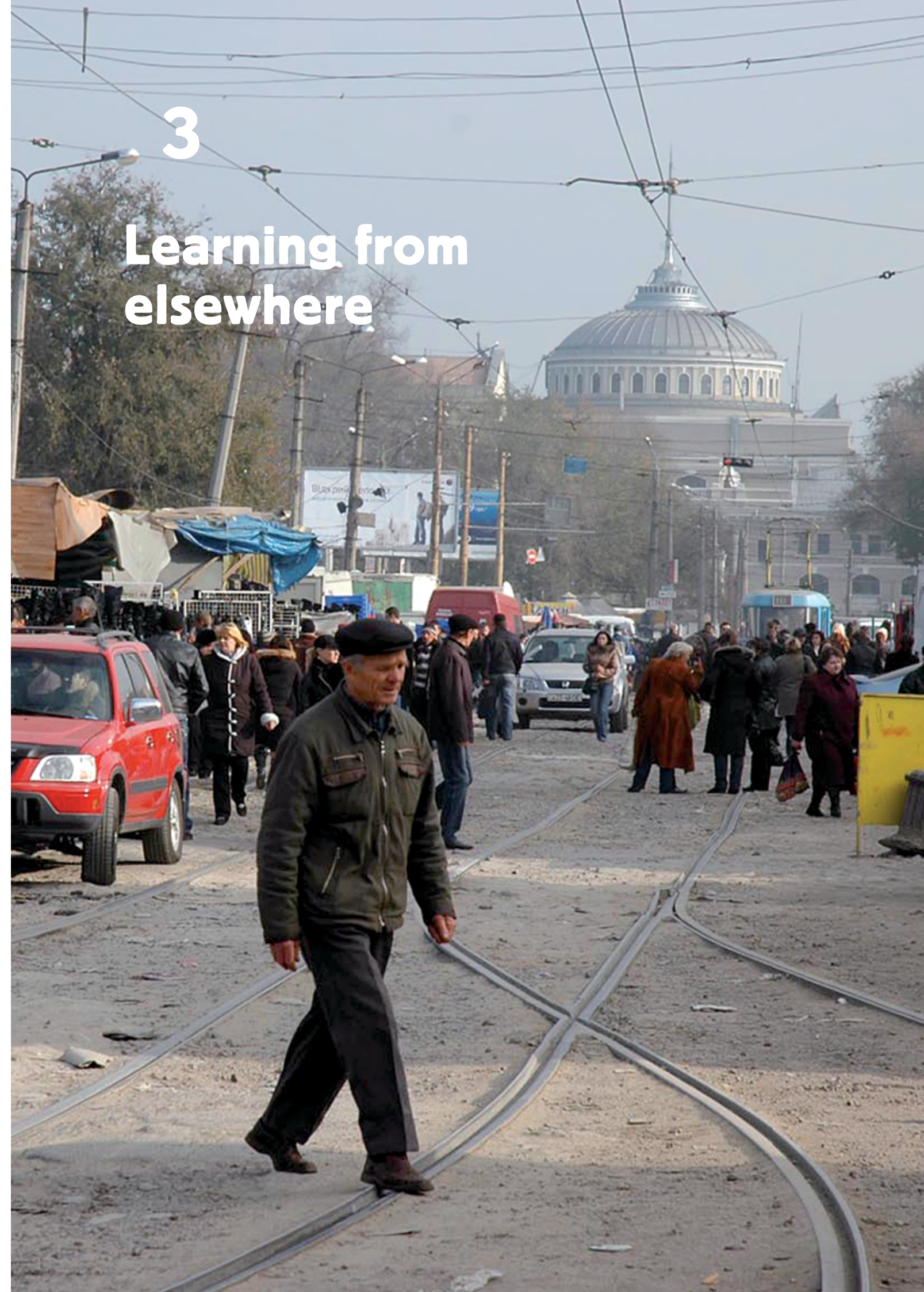
We intend to develop the connections of the Office to developing research areas within the School in particular to areas of Interior Design, and Urban Design which are new and developing areas of our curriculum. For the Project Office to continue to be successful, it needs to

be relevant to the staff and students in the School and the curriculum at all stages within the School. There are possibilities to also develop the relationships we have established with regional clients for research and other opportunities for student involvement.

We hope that this will be a point of reference for us to consider when a studio design project has the possibility to be implemented or when an opportunity arises for a real project to be a part of the student experience.



Mark West & Khaled Saleh, Summer interns programme 2009, South East Coastal Communities





# The School of Architecture and the Visual Arts, University of East London and the Faculty of Architecture and Spatial Design, London Metropolitan University

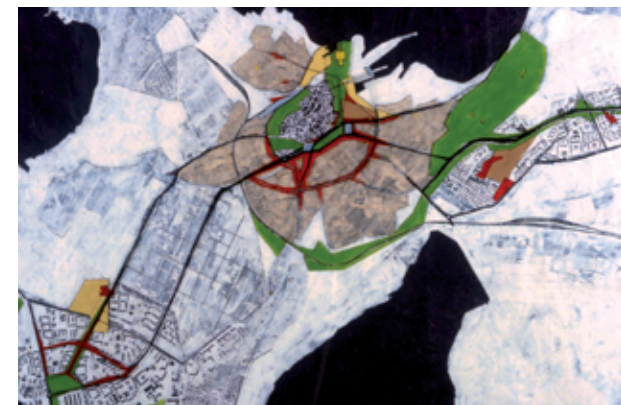
Text by Signy Svalastoga

In this paper I will first briefly set out the educational case for working in locations outside of our own culture. This is then viewed against former students reflecting on their experiences and what they learnt. Finally I will expand on current work in Odessa, and how this is now moving to a mutual collaboration with the Odessa State Academy of Architecture and Civil Engineering and with a prospect of developing collaborative research and live projects.

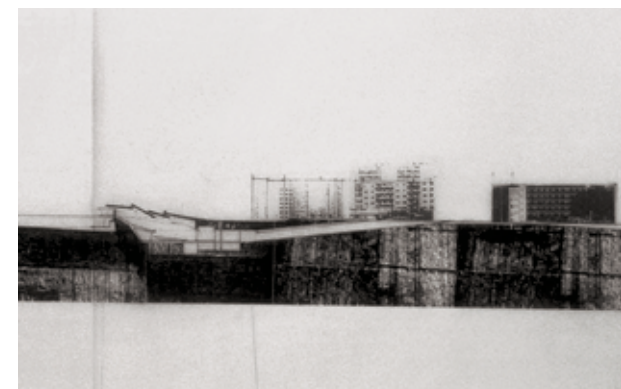
*knowing must [...] be accompanied by an equal capacity to forget knowing. Non-knowing is not a form of ignorance but a difficult transcendence of knowledge ...*

*The moment of looking at the world or a specific task as if neither has been encountered before, that is the creative instant and frame of mind.* (Bachelard, 1994)

I believe architects must have the abilities to interpret the needs, possibilities and aspirations of other people, cultures and places in order to perform our duty of care.



Ulrike Steven, Tallinn Urban Strategy, 1997



Asif Iqbal, Community Centre Tallinn, 1997

Working in an uncommon context makes very clear our role as outsiders. It also requires careful observation and the need to rely on intuition, instinct and interpretation.

What I have found is that setting design projects in these locations requires essential access to local contacts, institutions and policy makers, but also that this is actually easier to find than in locations closer to home, because of their surprise and delight in our choosing their city.

With these contacts in place, we are able to test our reading and understanding of their city as well as gaining access to essential base material.

I have also found that it is important to choose a city which has a scale suitable for walking, with a strong topography and material presence. As outsiders we do not necessarily understand what is important, and therefore need to map, record, measure, draw and collect everything as if it is equally important.

## Case studies

### Tallinn, Estonia, 1996/97 and 1998/99

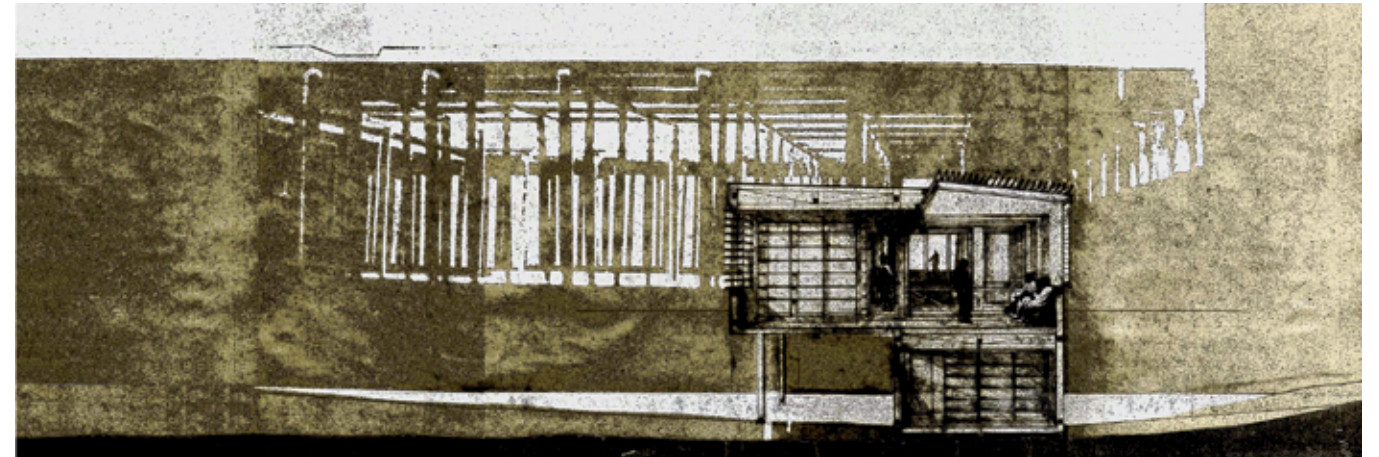
Tallinn, a former Hanseatic City, has had Danish, German, Swedish, Russian and Soviet influences during its development. The city sits on the edge of a bed of limestone, where Estonia meets the Gulf of Finland.

In recent times forty years of Soviet rule resulted in massive physical, social, demographic and cultural changes of an almost tectonic scale. This has left many ruptures and displacements in the city fabric, between the older medieval structures of the city centre and the newer Soviet structures and various monumental buildings of the periphery. Issues of tolerance are applicable in the city given its historical, political and social shifts. Currently the city is undergoing adjustments to its independence, with certain characteristics and pressures that gives shape to this particular urbanity. For example, the city's population count almost 50% Russians who were settled here during the Soviet years.

The studio concerns centred on the above conditions, developing urban strategies and architectural proposals, linking or negotiating between the new and the old.

Gareth Morris 2010, reflecting on his experience in 1996/97:

*With reference to Tallinn the key benefit was being able to see the city afresh as an exciting opportunity without the hang-ups, prejudices or issues that come with knowing 'how the city (administratively) works'. This meant that you can take on-board and work with all*



Christoph Hadrys, Music School, Dakar, 1998

*the political, social and physical 'things' that you found, so that the development of proposals and programs are uncluttered by pessimism or restrictions and rather all issues found can be balanced and processed to formulate a design judgement.*

*Tolerance was in particular an interesting theme to work with in Tallinn following the country's new found independence. Seeing the city from this perspective I believe was also encouraging to those from the city that we had contact with. It provided them with an opportunity to see new things that would otherwise have been undervalued or dismissed.*

Ulrike Steven 2010, reflecting on her experience in 1996/97:

*While treading carefully a stranger can reveal some of the prejudices and highlight injustices that exists within a country/culture. If communicated well, observations and outline proposals can start to stimulate debate and challenge the political climate and decision making.*

### Dakar Senegal, 1997/98 and 1999/2000

Dakar, Senegal, located on the Cap Vert peninsula, is the western most point of Africa. A former French colonial city, Dakar has been the capital of independent Senegal since 1960. The city of Dakar, with its wide boulevards flanked by leafy trees, is expressing its colonial past. But it also shares with other colonial cities the problems of overcrowding and amorphous city limits. 'The periphery grows without limits,' said Mamadou Dip, the Mayor of Dakar. 'One day you can pass a place where there is nothing and the next day you can pass the same place and find a whole settlement there, without electricity or water.'

We went to Dakar hoping we could learn something from investigating a place so different culturally, politically, historically from our own context. We found in Dakar an extraordinary hospitality, generosity and access to people and institutions at all levels. This was entirely due to our contacts Natalia and Massini Thiam, practicing architects and Massini Thiam was formerly the Head of the Department for Architecture and Urbanism.

In Dakar we focused on five large sites with radically different conditions. The Unit looked critically at how present plans and strategies for these sites could be developed with a tolerance towards its existing and often spontaneous settlements, occupation, materiality and texture. The Unit explored how local materials, skills and the ingenuity of the local settlements could be harnessed to develop further into material and detail strategies for public or civic scale buildings with a critical examination of an economy of means.

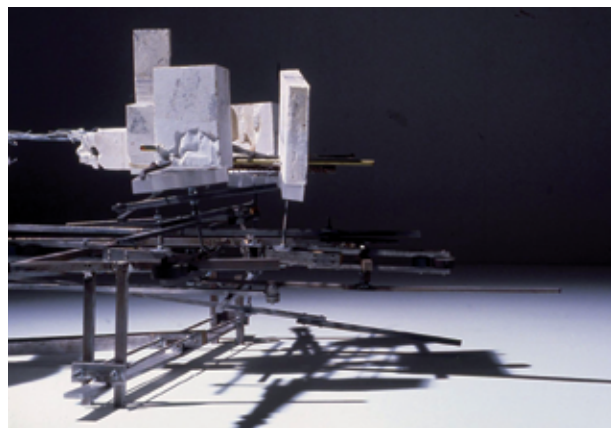
Eike Sindlinger 2010, reflecting on his experience in 1997/98:

*What seemed to be reasonable, logic and almost inevitable was put into perspective by the things I observed or learned in other countries like Senegal. It took a while to sink in, but till today, I think this was one of the most valuable experiences I ever made: the fact that people might think, feel, live and exist in a very different way and that this manifest itself in the built environment accordingly. Immersing oneself in this uncommonness and embracing it is very liberating as all of a sudden, you don't have to follow the schematics and the logic of what you have always done, but can imagine and develop the unthinkable. Nothing has to be the way you think it might be ..., it prepared me for working in various countries and contexts as I do today. And I found the ability to tune into the local culture and sensibilities tremendously helpful when dealing with clients and statutory bodies, as well as helping me to develop design concepts that are 'in tune' with their context.*

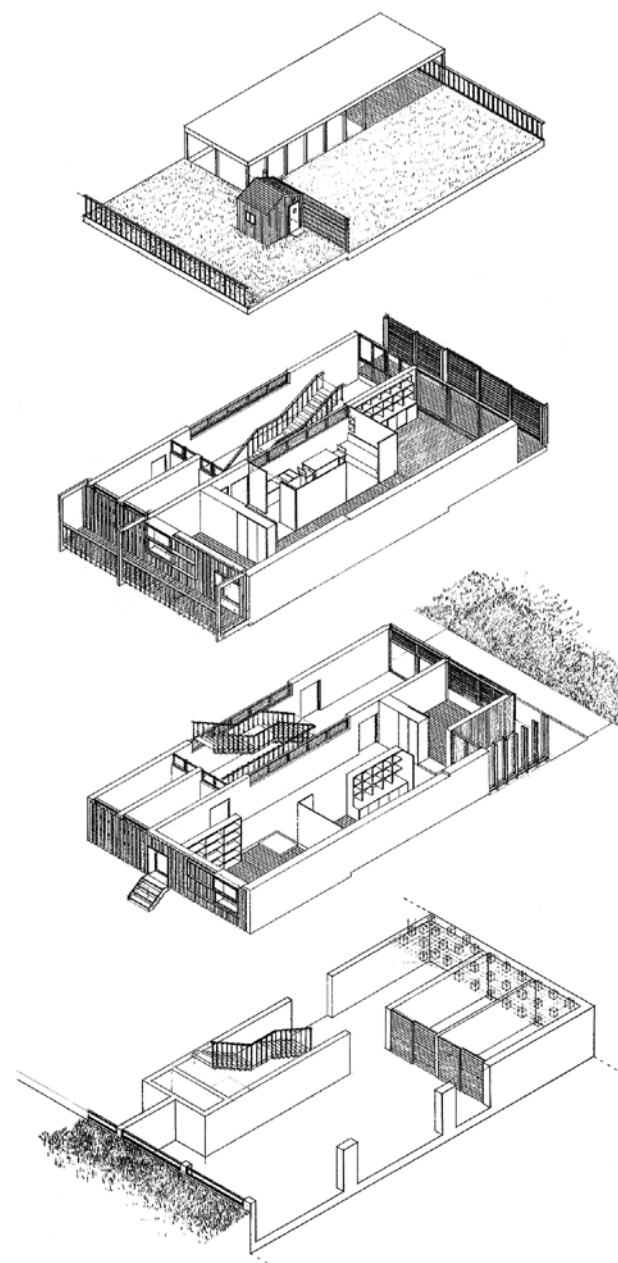


Dakar Street, 1998





Gareth Morris, Tallinn, 1997



Lorenzo de Chiffre, Tallinn Housing proposal, 1999

Stephen Hadley 2010 reflecting on his student experience 1998–2000:

*As a student from 1998–2000 I was lucky to work on projects in Tallinn, Estonia and Dakar, Senegal. Ten years on from completing my Diploma it is clear that this was a fantastic and unique opportunity to work with people in these inspiring locations. The benefits of working in these locations with ‘uncommon cultures’ are plentiful, but required considerable work to gain knowledge of the area and the culture.*

Learning from a city and gaining an understanding of its culture can only be touched upon in a study trip. But in many ways the immersive approach of ‘landing’ in a city without any preconceived ideas allows a fresh approach to any proposals. In both study trips we learnt first about a culture, a city and a community and then set about using this new found knowledge to inform and inspire architectural briefs that were developed to form proposals. This learning of the culture can be seen as an additional task of the design process, but one which results in rich and multi-layered projects.

It is certainly useful to have a contact in these locations, as we had on both occasions. These contacts have developed into strong working relationships over years and return visits. These relationships could continue to be developed into a formal exchange programme to continue the transfer and expansion of information and knowledge of uncommon cultures.

#### **Odessa, Ukraine, 2001/02, 2008/09 & 2009/10**

With the disintegration of the Soviet infrastructure and market, Odessa is navigating its way in a complex social and political landscape. Issues of land ownership, land erosion, pollution, clean water and poverty on the one hand and the rise of local and foreign entrepreneurs’ interests in privatising prime public space on the other. Investment much needed to tackle the former, and the destruction of Odessa’s urban and seaside qualities, a possible fallout of the latter.

Urban and building strategies for specific locations were developed, particularly focussing on programmes that could be serving the city and encourage investment whilst safeguarding public access to the sea. We developed tools and exercises that aim to generate fresh approaches and individual concerns across a range of scales with workshops and short projects.

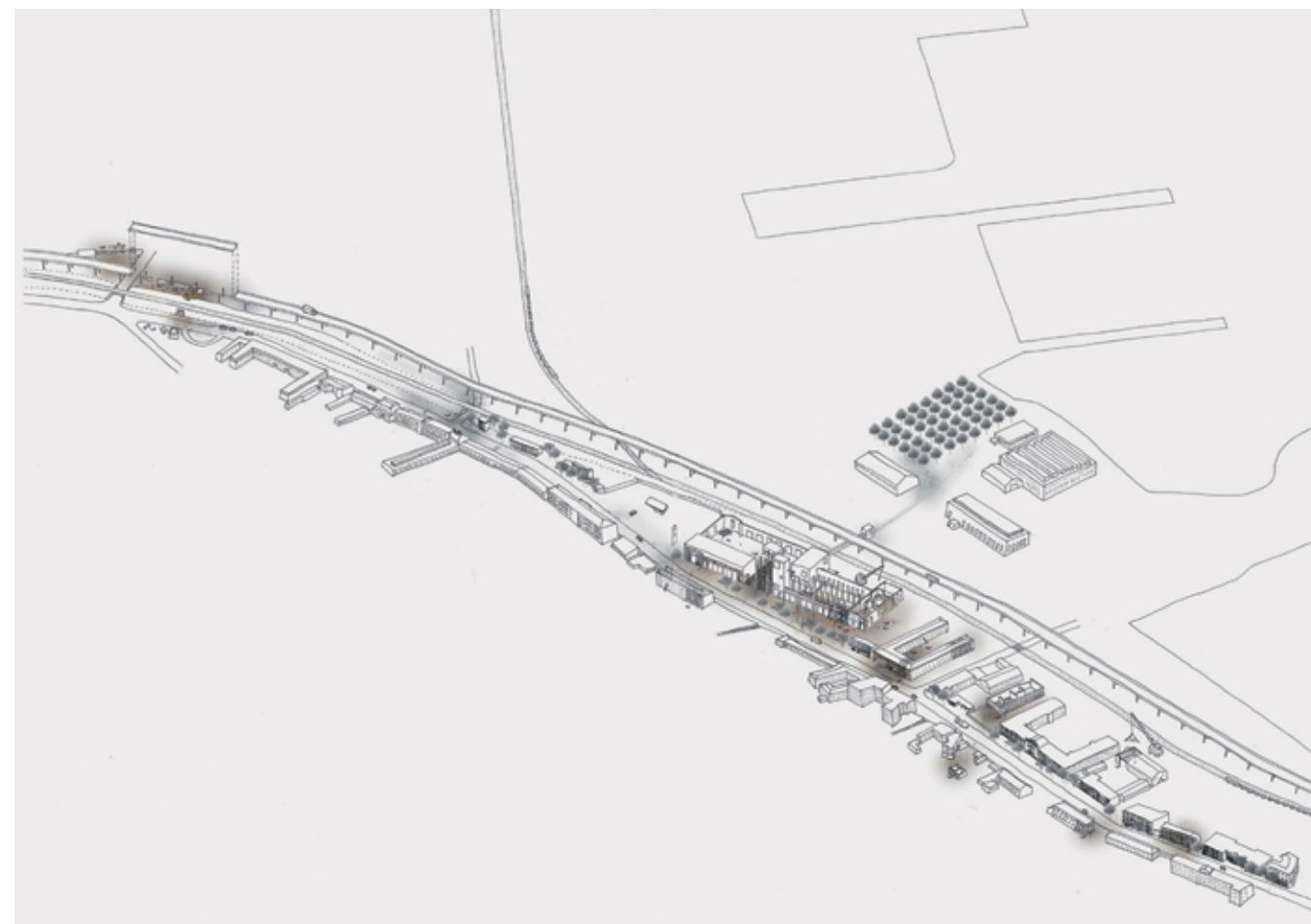
Nina Scholz 2010 reflecting on working in Odessa 2001/02:

*Working in, for us uncommon cultures gives a chance to use and value instinct and all senses to analyse and respond to the physical surroundings of the place. Simple methods such as walking are a great ‘tool’ to get a feel for the place, the atmosphere, the scale, the social context, the physicality etc.*

Examining/visiting a city such as Odessa one can’t trust common preconceptions, as the place is set within a very different cultural/social/economic context from ours. This creates a need for openness, the possibility of



Mikkel Rasmussen, School Library Dakar, 2000



Richard Hall, Odessa urban strategy, 2009



surprising or unexpected findings that can be of a very personal character.

Developing an architectural/urban idea from these new experiences and observations puts a big need for a visible decision-making process as all ‘common’ references are being tested. Questions are explored/ researched and tested through the help of physical media (models, drawings, mappings ...), which in the end form the argument and make it possible to communicate the idea to people from the outside.

Being in a new environment, one learns a lot about oneself and creates a different perspective on familiar everyday processes in one’s own country/city.

#### Current and ongoing collaboration with Odessa, Ukraine

Returning to work in Odessa, has resulted in the development of a strong collaboration with Odessa State Academy of Architecture and Construction, and the identification of future scope for developing research and live projects. We are also finding an increased interest in the work students produced from key institutions in the

City. At least three of last year’s project will be developed further and presented as alternative development framework plans to the City Planning Department. We are also researching funding possibilities for further research and live projects and an exhibition in Odessa of our work.

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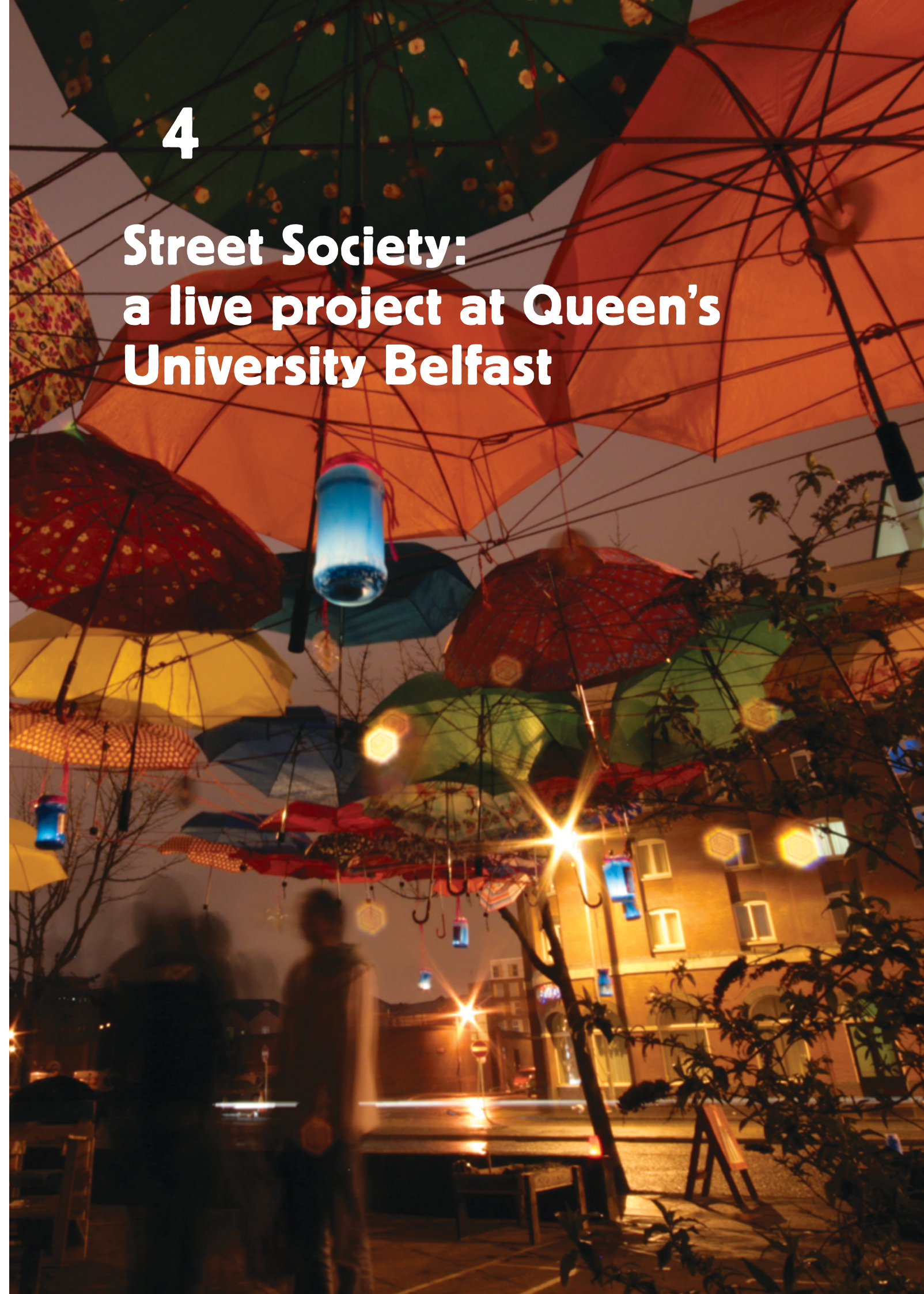
Richard Hall, Craftman's Garden Odessa, 2009



Carla Smyth, Odessa street study, 2009

# 4

## Street Society: a live project at Queen's University Belfast





# School of Planning, Architecture and Civil Engineering, Queen’s University Belfast

Text by Ruth Morrow & James Benedict Brown

The live project programme described in this chapter has four distinct layers of contextual relationship to the community, university and school in which it is located. Firstly, this is a University operating within a complex post-conflict context, with which the institution has established a growing commitment to develop meaningful and lasting engagement. Secondly, this is a school of architecture that is developing research on and through live projects, building upon existing studies and research in the UK and USA. Thirdly, this is a live project that actively addresses issues of student retention, drawing upon the resources offered by the University to give confidence to students and retain those who might be considering premature departure from architectural education. Fourthly, it is a live project operating within an established theoretical and pedagogical context, seeking to develop new and strengthen existing skills in the student body.

One Monday in March 2010, the first year cohorts from both undergraduate and postgraduate architecture courses in the School of Planning, Architecture and Civil Engineering (SPACE) at Queen’s University Belfast (QUB) came together for a one week live project. By the following Friday, the twelve groups had completed a range of projects which included designs for an urban playground and a floating demountable theatre, a toolkit for planning autistic-friendly school classrooms, a low cost, phased proposal for a rural community centre, a site intervention to highlight leftover, degraded space in the city and provocative design strategies for the humanising of two Interface Zones between Belfast’s Nationalist and Loyalist communities.

We understand live projects as teaching projects that bring university-based students of architecture into contact with one or more aspects of the reality of architectural practice: a real client, a real outcome; and/or a real budget. (Sara, 2004 & 2006; Watt & Cottrell,



2006; Chiles & Holder, 2008). While live projects have been a feature of architectural education in the United Kingdom for many decades, their deployment as pedagogical tools remains largely speculative and under theorised (Watt & Cottrell, 2006).

By occupying just one week of the spring semester, Street Society (as the live project was named) recognised the anxiety with which live projects might be received in a curriculum from which they have mostly been previously absent. If live projects are to be successfully exploited at SPACE, Street Society would have to begin with modest gestures that would respond to the precise contextual issues of architectural education both in the city of Belfast, but also within the School.

As a teaching concept, Street Society sought to perform several key pedagogical functions (Morrow, 2007, p.281), enabling students to:

- Learn about the pace, levels of production and bravery needed to bring short projects to successful completion.
- Understand that a context of tight budgets and limited timescale demands a heightened sense of creativity, relying on compromise, improvisation, humour, risk taking.
- Begin to develop the ability to negotiate the use/ occupation of/access to space with various stakeholders.
- Develop team working and collaborative skills. Understand the importance of effective documentation and communication.
- Develop ability to look afresh and critically at everyday situations, and reconceptualize them.

As a learning activity that bridged the design studio and the ‘real’ world, it was also designed to contribute to the growing commitment of Architecture at QUB to strengthen its engagement in the development of Belfast and surrounding areas. There is only now, more than ten years after the signing of the Good Friday Peace Agreement (1998), an understanding of the lasting effects that the Troubles have had not only on the built environment, but also on the confidence, vision, discourse and processes that are part of the generation and critique of the built environment.

Opening image: left-over Spaces Project by Street Society Students. Photo: Ollie Chapman; left: forum for an Alternative Belfast (FAB) client meeting. Photo: Michelle Reuter



Northumberland Street ‘interface zone’, Belfast. Images: Michelle Reuter

External organisations and individuals were asked to propose potential projects that architecture students could work on over a one week period. The submitted proposals were shortlisted by a group of staff and postgraduate students based on their suitability, accessibility and interest. Clients were introduced to the intended learning outcomes and aspirations of Street Society through the project handbook. This handbook was shared with tutors and students in order to minimise the risk of misunderstanding between stakeholders. Managing the expectations of clients and students in this interaction was of vital importance. We were mindful of the risks involved in live projects, specifically Professor Steven Moore’s observation that there is an ‘inherent allergy between teaching and creating a product’ (quoted in Brand & Rincón, 2007, p.46). If we are to address this ‘inherent allergy,’ we believed we could best begin by articulating from the very outset the responsibilities, expectations and obligations of all stakeholders in the project. In the clients’ chapter of the handbook, we stated clearly that:

*Although Street Society is an extremely short project, with up to nine students in each group, we hope that much can be achieved. It will be the collective responsibility of the students and their client to agree upon realistic and achievable outcomes for the week. At the end of the project, our students will be returning to their set curriculum, and they will not be able to devote any more time to the project. We will, however, encourage students to stay in touch with practitioners and clients with whom they may work again in the future.*

The handbook also emphasised the students’ obligation to prepare two very different conclusions for the end of the week: a presentation to their clients, and a more reflective event with peers, tutors and the general public.

Like many schools of architecture in Britain, SPACE suffers from a cultural disconnection between its undergraduate and taught postgraduate schools, heightened by the physical separation of design studios located in two different University buildings. By bringing together students from both undergraduate and postgraduate courses, Street Society sought to build fruitful connections between students at different stages in the course. Masters students were encouraged to build

upon the experiences and skills developed in their post RIBA Part I practice experience to guide the projects. As part of the development of their professional skills they were asked to lead on the production of a risk assessment for the project and ensure that all students knew how to act ‘safely’ in the context of the project. Undergraduate students were encouraged to be equal partners in the collaboration, and on a number of occasions the energy and creativity they brought to problem-solving spurred on the work process. Several postgraduate students confided that their levels of motivation had been lifted by working with younger students whose aspirations hadn’t been dulled by the realities of professional experience. In turn, undergraduate students expressed their relief at the approachability of the Masters students, with the most obvious benefit being their exposure to more sophisticated graphical techniques.

With a project duration of just one week, there were no expectations that this live project could necessarily produce tangible products, let alone completed buildings. Live projects that occur over longer time spans, such as a semester at the University of Nottingham (Stacey, 2009) or a whole year at Auburn University (Dean, 2002 & 2005), inevitably draw students towards built conclusions, but face very different challenges. Street Society was conceived as a short, sharp interruption to the second semester. Furthermore, the brevity of Street Society pushed students towards alternative outcomes: explorations of alternative processes, methods and practices, all of which are component, if not always valorised, elements of contemporary practice. Important concerns such as managing budgets and client expectations remained at the fore.

At the end of the week all the projects were presented in an external public venue to a large invited audience. For some of the undergraduate students it was the first time they had presented to such a large audience, but the momentum of the afternoon meant all projects were successfully if not always effectively presented. Ten days after the event, as part of a Skills Module in the undergraduate year one course, each group was asked to present the skills they had learnt or drawn on that would contribute to their professional development. This space for reflection is important not only to capture but also to value skills that the Design Studio rarely has time for.



Perhaps the most poignant reflection made by a student was that by witnessing how much the community cared about the project it helped them to care about it more. It is this source of motivation, naturally underpinning intense learning, that is often missing from traditional studio based projects. Knowing why one needs to learn is one thing, ‘caring’ to learn is another. If students can invest their projects with such motivation, they will themselves pave the way to deeper and more sustainable learning.

An area of interest in our ongoing research into live projects relates to the manner in which they conclude. One Street Society project has subsequently continued in its development. Belfast City Council, the original client, is intent on realising the students’ proposal for one of the Interface Zone Projects: a public realm design located between two security gates on the peace wall between the (Unionist) Shankhill Road and the (Nationalist) Falls Road communities of west Belfast. Following the positive reception of the students work from cross-community groups, the council has appointed an architecture practice to develop the students’ project to completion, with a target date of December 2010 and budget of £150,000. The students have been tasked with representing the communities as design advocates; documenting the

process and designing the launch of the space in a way that draws in community involvement and an understanding of how the space can be used as a neutral ‘event’ space. We see this outcome as a way to address the concern that live projects often stray into the economic and litigious territory of architectural practice

Looking back on the experience of the first Street Society, we have a number of areas of concern for future live projects to explore.

We are aware that we need to better understand the briefing and debriefing process. These critiques are not unique to live projects nor architectural education. From the perspective of geography education, Kent, Gilbertson and Hunt note that ‘debriefing of students is a critical but often neglected part of student fieldwork’ (Kent et al., 1997, p.332). It is not necessarily enough to offer students the space for reflection: we mean to explore better ways of hard-wiring the process of meaningful debriefing and structured reflection into future live projects.

Feedback from members of staff at SPACE confirm that concern remains that external organisations have expectations that are not being met by student-led projects. Street Society actively sought to address this very risk, although there is evidently room for improvement.



Street Society students surveying vacant above ground space for Forum for an Alternative Belfast (FAB).  
Photo: Michelle Reuter

Street Society was unassessed. Students were not informed of this at the beginning of the project, although it would be naïve to think that they were unaware of this, and it can perhaps explain why some groups suffered a slight (and predictable) erosion of attendance or motivation during the week. Should live projects be assessed? And if we do assess, is this more useful as provision of structured feedback or to ensure 100% attendance? What is the trade off between rigorous assessment and structured debriefing and project evaluation: with the collaboration of real clients, can we afford, let alone accept, less than 100% attendance from our students?

Is Street Society financially sustainable? We invested approximately £600 in materials and an additional £400 for a PhD student to act as project co-ordinator. Just one client, however, Belfast City Council, has provided income of £300 for initial proposals and a further £1,500 for the continuation of the project described above (some of which is providing students with part time employment during the summer vacation). Leveraging sources of funding from within the University, Street Society piggy backed on a small amount of institutional funding to strengthen undergraduate student retention. A further source of income came after the project, when two of its lead academics received a QUB teaching award for Excellence in Teaching First Year Students, some of which will be reinvested into the ongoing development of Street Society. In the coming year we also want to better understand Street Society as an ‘event’ – one that is both pedagogical and cultural – with the potential to access other funding sources.

The most important issue regarding live projects remains, however: How can we connect Street Society into a research agenda? Two projects in particular were aligned to individual staff members’ personal research areas, although it is uncertain whether students’ and the resulting ‘data’ can be reliably deployed in research activity. Outcome from the Interface Zone project with Belfast City Council will also become the focus of a research paper. We believe, in principle, however that Street Society gives not only students, but also staff the space to pause and rediscover the enthusiasm with which



Playground client meeting with Street Society students.  
Photo: Pearse McCann

we approach our day to day practice. If the work of twelve students over five days does not contribute ‘bankable’ data to a staff member’s research project, it does at least help to re-invigorate the research and teaching discourse in the school.

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Interface Zone collage by Street Society students



## 5

# Negotiating conflict in the urban environment: Jerusalem's Damascus Gate

## Department of Architecture, Cambridge University

Text by Maximilian Gwiazda & Wendy Pullan

This article offers a brief introduction to the 'Conflict in Cities' project at the Department of Architecture in the University of Cambridge. It reflects on the role of architecture in the social sciences and impact-driven research in conflict situations. The project integrates research and teaching, and student contributions are part of the research at various levels. The project's work on Damascus Gate in Jerusalem is discussed as a case study that pertains to the question of studying the importance of everyday life in safeguarding diversity and equity in the urban environment.

### Conflict in Cities

'Conflict in Cities and the Contested State' is a multidisciplinary research project including specialists in urbanism, politics, sociology and geography, but led by a team from the Department of Architecture at the University of Cambridge. Using the site-oriented ethos of architecture, with the discipline's focus on observation, analysis and interpretation of place, methodologies more common in the design studio are combined with interviewing techniques that are the bread and butter of the social sciences. As such, the research project has generated interest amongst a variety of architecture students and teachers as well post-graduate researchers.

Funded by the ESRC's Large Grants Programme, Conflict in Cities focuses on divided cities as key sites in territorial conflicts over state and national identities, cultures and borders.<sup>1</sup> The project started in 2007 and will run until 2012, building on earlier grants that were also led by Cambridge's Department of Architecture.<sup>2</sup> Primary research objectives of the current project are to analyse how divided cities in Europe and the Middle East have been shaped by ethnic, religious and national conflicts. Conversely, the project explores how cities can absorb, resist and potentially play a role in transforming the conflicts that pervade them. The project seeks to understand the role that architecture and the urban fabric play as a setting and background for everyday activities and events in the context of cities as arenas of intensified conflicts. The main research sites are Belfast and Jerusalem, two very distinctive cities – one firmly embedded in the West and one central to the Middle East – and both at different stages of national conflict and peace building.

Conflict in Cities is based in three UK universities, under the leadership of Wendy Pullan (Architecture, Cambridge), Mick Dumper (Politics, Exeter) and Liam O'Dowd and James Anderson (respectively Sociology and Geography, Queen's Belfast). The mix of disciplines derives from the awareness that a city is far too complex a phenomenon to be studied from the perspective of any single field. While the literature, methods, and criteria of the disciplines involved are respected, the city itself establishes a common ground which provides a touchstone and some level of unity for the project. In an effort to investigate the nature of conflictual relations in everyday urban life, the project makes extensive use of site observation, photography, mapping and various forms of drawing, including detailed three-dimensional representations of rich urban settings. The use of visual and spatial research strategies complements and diversifies the methods of the social sciences that usually rely more exclusively on data derived from interviews and textual sources.

While the aim of the project is not to advocate architectural or design proposals for conflict 'management' or 'resolution', Conflict in Cities makes considerable efforts in engaging policymakers and community activists. The project entertains close ties with a network of Non-Governmental Organisations and municipal bodies and regularly organises fora where research findings are presented to variety of non-academic stakeholders. Recently the project organised a series of roundtables addressing future scenarios for the city of Jerusalem with senior activists, national representatives, and policy-advisers. This dialogue culminated in a publication entitled 'Jerusalem: The Cost of Failure' published by the Royal Institute of International Affairs.<sup>3</sup> The paper was launched at Chatham House in London in February 2010 and was

Image left: Palestinians and Orthodox Jews passing through Damascus Gate on a Friday Evening; right: Israeli Defence Forces above Damascus Gate





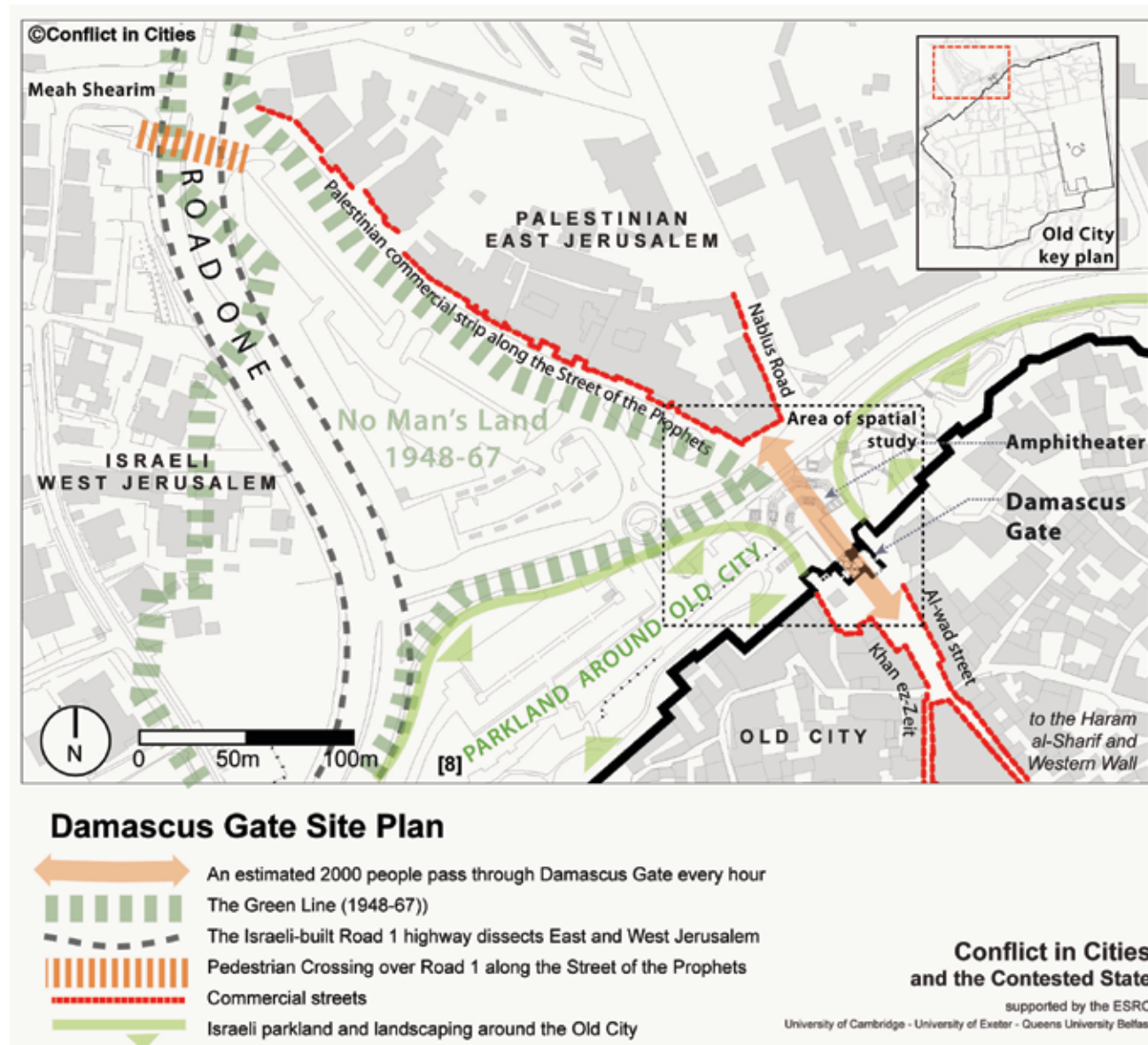


Figure 1

attended by guests ranging from representatives of international media, embassies, foreign diplomats, FCO, MOD, to global business and commerce. The varied line-up helped to bridge the gap between academic researcher and practitioner, and allowed for a debate on the current *impasse* in Jerusalem and the danger of escalating tension on the ground. The briefing paper has since been widely circulated and featured in media coverage with an abridged version appearing in the op-ed pages of The Independent. The high level of interest in the project clearly comes from its comparative urban and spatial perspectives and attests to the relevance of architectural research beyond its own disciplinary boundaries and specialised audiences.

Besides Belfast and Jerusalem, Conflict in Cities has also built an international network of project partners and collaborators who work on seven other 'linked' cities in Europe and the Middle East: Brussels, Berlin, Mostar, Nicosia, Tripoli (Lebanon), Beirut, and Kirkuk. Just as the project benefits from multidisciplinary study, contextual and comparative research helps to inform the

fundamental findings. A PhD programme, with seven students each researching one of the linked cities is an integral part of the project on three accounts: First, through graduate dissertations the project will extend the range of in-depth studies of cities covered thus providing a broader empirical base upon which general patterns can be discerned. Secondly, the interactions and intellectual synergy between the graduate students, the research assistants, project partners and team investigators contribute towards widening and fine-tuning a methodological framework for the study of conflict in cities that will encompass a range of disciplines. Finally, the involvement of graduates in the project will assist in the establishment of a cohort of researchers trained in a multidisciplinary environment, which will lay the foundations for future work and dissemination. Project investigators, postdoctoral researchers and graduate students regularly present their work to undergraduate audiences in the context of the curriculum in the architecture departments and through a large number of visiting lectures delivered in the UK and abroad.

## Case study

### The spatialities of a divided city – Damascus Gate

Jerusalem is a deeply contested city. Conflict between Israelis and Palestinians dominates almost every aspect of life and the fissures are heavily imprinted on the city's physical and social fabric. The conflict is intense and enduring, having existed in one form or another since 1948. Israeli planning policy since 1967 has focused on the 'unification' of Jerusalem by the insertion of settlements into Palestinian East Jerusalem, claiming to make it impossible for the city to be re-divided by either military or political pressure. Effectively, it has prevented the expansion of Palestinian neighbourhoods, and rather than unity, it has produced an extraordinarily fragmented city, with many internal hostile borders. Yet the category of a 'divided' city to some extent masks the complexity of Jerusalem's spatial realities. The spaces which Israelis and Palestinians inhabit in Jerusalem may be different from each other, but the divisions between them are not always simple or obvious. In order to understand the nature of these two urban situations and how they do or do not interlock, Conflict in Cities has conducted micro-

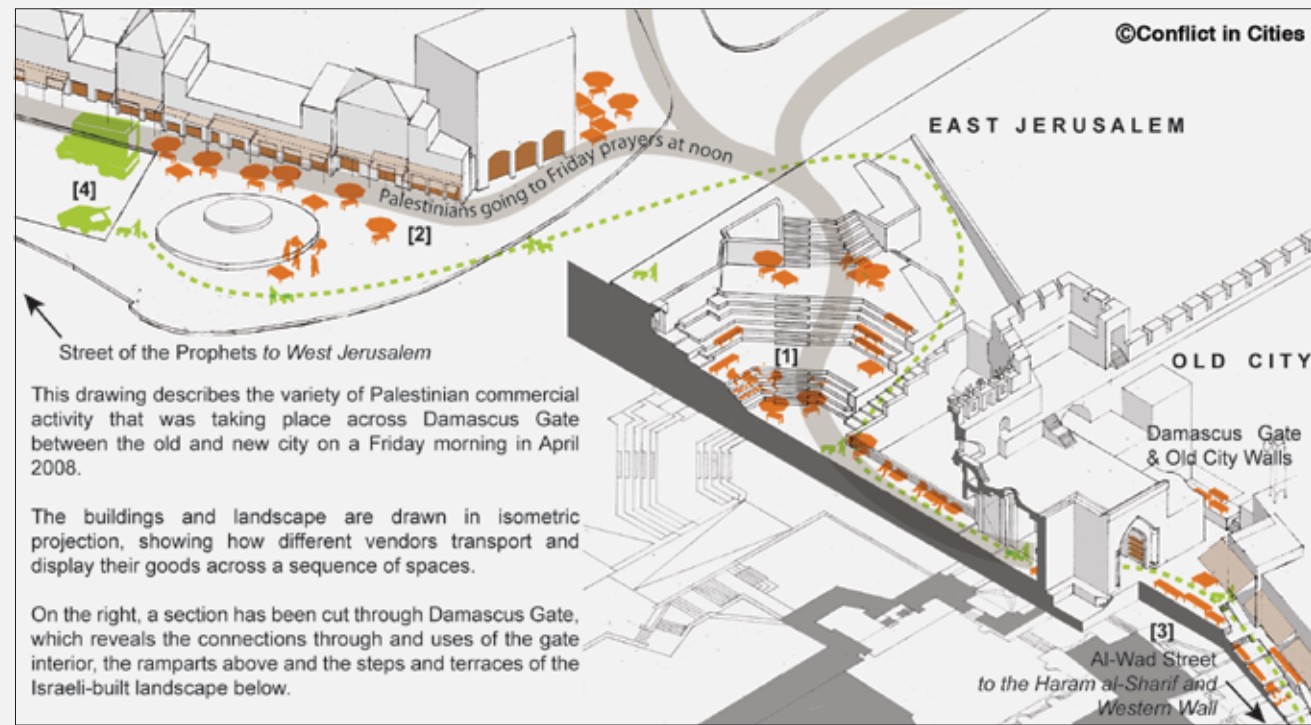
spatial studies in different parts of Jerusalem. Despite the deteriorating situation in the city, the strained relations and power-asymmetries between both communities, the research is conducted in cooperation with a team of both Palestinian and Israeli researchers, which is, sadly, a rare occurrence today. The cooperation occurs at the level of fieldwork conducted on the ground, as well as in the context of workshops and other activities.

Over regular periods of time, the project has carried out *in situ* research on representative parts of the city making extensive use of site observation, mapping, drawing, interviews, media and archival research. The areas investigated include the former no-man's land in the centre of the city, the 'frontier urbanism' of the metropolitan periphery, as well as the historic and religious core of the Old City. Together they constitute key areas of the town; one would expect each to fulfil certain functions and all to act together to form the whole. We argue that different kinds of spaces need to be studied in depth, in order to understand why conflict may be less damaging in some places than others. By focusing on everyday life and their urban settings, rather than simply policies and major political events, the project asks whether certain spaces, particularly in border zones are



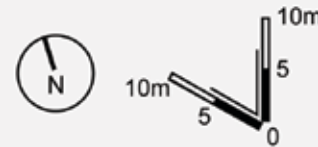
Palestinian activity on a Friday morning outside Damascus Gate





## Damascus Gate

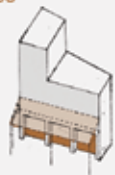
Palestinian commercial topography: Friday morning April 4th, 2008



### KEY:



shops



### Commercial strips interrupted

A buffer zone of open space has been established around the Old City walls through Israeli planning regulations whose origins date back to the British Mandate. This policy is evident here by the amphitheater [1] that disconnects the commercial strip on the Street of the Prophets [2] (which runs from Israeli west Jerusalem into the Palestinian east side) from the shops within the Old City. Within the walls, Al-wad street [3 & left photograph] is lined with around 150 shops along its length from the interior of Damascus gate to the entrances of the Haram al-Sharif and Western Wall plaza.



stalls



### Informal commercial resistance

The Palestinian commercial topography within the amphitheater and the adjacent open spaces has resisted Israeli planning and security restrictions via an informal market that flourishes during times of significant pedestrian traffic, such as Friday mornings before muslim prayers in the Old City. The market consists of tightly packed street furniture: either direct extensions of shops or self-contained stalls where peddlers compete with shopkeepers by selling cut price goods. Amongst the stalls, sitting against the Israeli-built stone terraces, the *fellaheen* (the Palestinian term for agrarian people) display their herbs and vegetables on adjacent steps and ledges [left photograph] - as long as Israeli authorities are absent or turning a blind eye.



vehicular deliveries

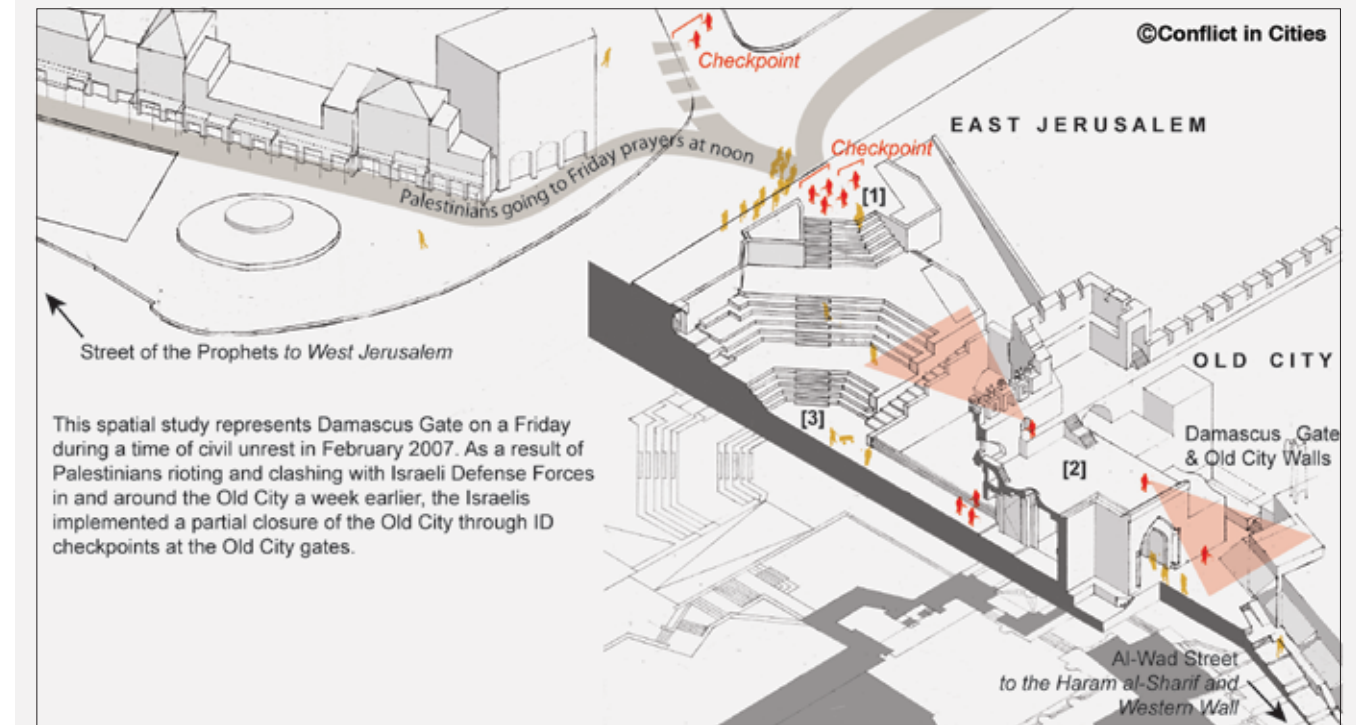
carts for hire



### Mobility of goods

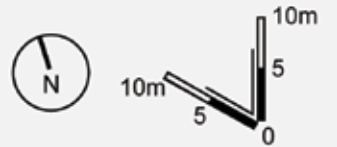
Commercial activity around the Old City is facilitated by the readily available, carts that can be hired from various locations [left photograph]. The carts enable the transport of many types of goods, with their drivers highly adept at negotiating the difficult and crowded terrain. The carts also form part of a mobile sales force that expands the catchment area of traders in the Old City beyond their own shops and also the city walls. Importantly, the carts also transfer goods into and out of the Old City where vehicles can park and unload, in this case from a loading area on the Street of the Prophets [4].

Figure 2



## Damascus Gate

Closure: Friday morning February 9th, 2007



### KEY:



Palestinian queues at checkpoint



Israeli security forces (IDF)

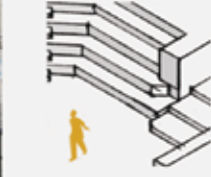
### Checkpoints

The IDF are able to quickly close down access to the Old City following incidents such as the Mughrabi ramp unrest in 2007 as demonstrated by the ID checkpoint set up at the top of the amphitheater [1] preventing access by Palestinian men under a certain age [photograph].



### Surveillance

The IDF also take up monitoring positions around the gate [photograph] and also along the ramparts above where they can observe from high level those crossing Damascus Gate from both sides [2].



### Impact of Closure

The resulting restrictions on movement and volume of people entering and leaving the Old City meant the disappearance of the great majority of commerce, movement and vibrancy that has characterised the Damascus Gate area both before and since this period of closure [3 & photograph].

Figure 3



more conducive to sharing and co-existence. By the same token investigations into the nature of interface areas and boundaries within these areas, as well as the relationships (or discontinuities) which exist have revealed the deeply political nature of planning and urban design, disciplines which continue to be falsely presented as technical or aesthetic in nature. At an earlier stage of the research both Palestinian and Israeli students were involved in gathering primary data, which was discussed and collected in a crit-like situation.

One case study that has played a central role in the research from the first stages of the project is the area in and around Damascus Gate (Fig. 1), the site where the Old City meets the new and where the remains of the former border ('green line') between Jordan and Israel forms the hinterland between competing Israeli and Palestinian interests.<sup>4</sup> To the south, the Gate leads into the dense urban fabric of the Muslim Quarter, and into Al-Wad Street, one of the major commercial streets of the Old City and which intersects key routes that lead to the major religious sites, holy to Islam, Judaism and Christianity. The figures presented in this article are a brief selection of the visual research methodology employed by the project to analyse the urban situation of the Gate area. The spatial study offers a snapshot of the myriad activities taking place at the gate on a particular Friday morning (Fig. 2). More than merely illustrative these visual research methods contribute to a process of documentation and enquiry; they are both communicative and analytical, revealing patterns of everyday dynamics in the city, often ignored not only by policy-makers and planners but also scholars studying the city.

What emerges from the spatial analysis of Damascus Gate is that Jerusalem's Old City enjoys a multitude of connections (social and economic amongst others) with the wider urban area. This is despite the fact that Jerusalem suffers from an increasingly harsh occupation with segregationist policies that have intentionally limited Palestinian mobility. Planners, policymakers, and architects have tended to represent the Old City as a self-contained religious area essentially segregated from its wider urban functions and areas of the 'mundane' city. What the visual analysis reveals is precisely the contrary, namely the manifestation of a vibrant Palestinian commercial landscape that on the whole can resist the potentially deadening effect of the incongruous urban design interventions the site has been subject to since the British Mandate, culminating in the western-centrist amphitheatre built by the Israelis after 1967. These spatial studies also reflect the changing nature of the city over time. As part of ongoing research the project has produced a wider body of such representations of Damascus Gate and other interface areas in the Old City. The drawings represented here demonstrate the capacity of urban spaces to harbour a variety of informal practices that make up a rich public space. At certain times this same area is used by some Israelis and Palestinians in what can only be called quotidian living: the market is still used by some Israelis at times of greater perceived safety and stability, and on Friday evenings, religious Jews will pass through this area from the orthodox

neighbourhoods in the West to reach the Western Wall in the Old City for prayer. Similar spatial studies representing the area when the city is experiencing civil unrest, show how the same spaces can easily be controlled by the Israeli police and military units, closing off the Old City in a highly confrontational period (Fig. 3). In making such visual analysis, the question of shared and contested space in a conflict situation may be reassessed and considered beyond the Lefebvrian social construct to one in which the built environment and spatial orientation act reciprocally with human events.

Many of today's peace proposals and political scenarios for the city argue for complete division of the city as well as the separation of urban functions. While there is no doubt that Palestinian Jerusalemites must be able to realise a full and just existence in the city under a leadership of their choice, as much as Israeli Jerusalemites require the security that they desire, the question of what constitutes a viable and even healthy city is one too often neglected by the negotiators. Too often everyday life is brushed aside and its interactions that are rooted in rich urban settings are imperilled rather than aided by conventional planning policies. Understanding and respecting urban life in all of its diversity is a key challenge for Jerusalem, if the city is to recover possibilities of stability.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> 'Conflict in Cities' is funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (RES-060-25-0015). The authors wish to thank Lefkos Kyriacou, responsible for visual research on the project, for producing the graphics. Publications, information on the cities, as well as project news and events are available on: [www.conflictincities.org](http://www.conflictincities.org).
- <sup>2</sup> *Conflict in Cities: Architecture and Urban Order in Divided Jerusalem, 2003-4 and 2005-7*; both supported by the ESRC. Further details on the project website, as noted above.
- <sup>3</sup> Available for download: [www.chathamhouse.org.uk/publications/papers/view/-/id/835](http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/publications/papers/view/-/id/835)
- <sup>4</sup> Publication of the research findings is ongoing. For some examples of the work published in relation to Damascus Gate so far, see: Pullan, W. (2006), *Locating the Civic in the Frontier: Damascus Gate*. In M. Miessen and S. Basar (eds.), *Did Someone Say Participate? An Atlas of Spatial Practice*, MIT Press and Frankfurt: Revolver, Cambridge Mass and London, pp.109-22. Pullan, W., P. Misselwitz, R. Nasrallah and H. Yacobi (2007) Jerusalem's Road 1. City 11, pp.176-98.

# 6

## Live projects and their role in studio teaching





# Faculty of Architecture and Spatial Design, London Metropolitan University

Text by Toby Pear & Maurice Mitchell

Over the last three years a number of live projects have emerged from a process of engagement with Indian communities which have made a significant contribution to studio teaching at London Metropolitan University and to educational pedagogy. This paper compares this experience with other live project studios in the United States and Austria and discusses the potential for up-scaling the role of live projects in UK architectural education to prepare future practitioners to serve the architecturally neglected vast majority of the world’s population.

## Case studies

### The Navi Mumbai Community Classrooms Project

In the summer of 2008 two students of the London Metropolitan University Faculty of Architecture and Spatial Design (ASD) carried out a survey of temporary worker settlements in the stone quarries of Navi Mumbai, India, on behalf of ARPHEN, a local NGO. ARPHEN had initiated a programme of bridge classes for young children to give them access to state primary education. ARPHEN trained the teachers, but they were in need of classrooms to serve their extensive programme dispersed over fifteen kilometres of linear quarry settlements.

The survey identified nine potential classroom sites. Bo Tang and Shamoon Patwari, of ASD’s Project Office and funded by the Water Trust, constructed the first community classroom at Baban Seth Quarry in March 2009. In October and November of that year they built another classroom at the Tata Press Quarry with six fifth year students.

Despite the long distance relationships necessary between the NGO and ASD, the project has been a resounding success and there remain few children of primary school age in the stone quarries who are not yet being educated. ARPHEN regards the problem as solved and has moved on to tackle more pressing issues such as the spread of HIV/AIDS.

This collaboration of a London School of Architecture with an Indian NGO offered advantages for both parties. Students present a potentially eager and capable work force, effectively volunteering their efforts for the benefit of the community and the NGO, who would not otherwise be able to afford the skills of an architect. The students have a test bed: an opportunity to get stuck in and gain

valuable building experience, practising and absorbing pragmatic skills that are often missing in studio bound activity. In addition, with relatively cheap material and labour costs, India offers an easier context than the UK in which to build quickly and without prohibitive cost. But time was short and the cultural and physical context had to be understood and the building designed, approved by the community and constructed within just seven weeks. This need for speed focused the mind and limited the options. Students needed to absorb and adapt the ways of building practised locally: ways which had been found to respond to local climate and fit within the local neighbourhood settlement patterns.

Davis (2005) writes that:

*healthy ... architecture ... has traditionally developed through common, culturally embedded knowledge of building, along with the political and economic ability to put that knowledge to use.*

The classrooms however, with their low brick walls, steel structure, grilles and reinforced corrugated plastic roofing are not born of a deep seated local building tradition but of the skills and resources immediately available and everyday contemporary practice. The materials of construction and form of the building adhered to local norms. These materials were accessible, affordable and the skills existed to use them adequately. However, the classrooms also had a recognisable coherence lacking in most of the neighbouring structures. A new form of amenity building has begun to emerge with spans longer than the domestic but nevertheless fitting well amongst the collection of buildings making up the quarry communities. For the students, the importance of learning from local techniques first before adapting these techniques to a particular site was well understood.



Opening image: queuing for entry to the opening ceremony for the Tata press community classroom, Navi Mumbai; right: opening ceremony for the Tata press community classroom. Photo: Odel Jeffries



Extended community space between Baban Seth Community Classroom and Hindu temple, Navi Mumbai. Photo: Bo Tang

### Kuchhpura Settlement Upgrading Project

The success of the Navi Mumbai project was built off the template of a longer term relationship between ASD and another NGO, CURE, and in particular the project work they undertook together in Kuchhpura, Agra. In November 2006 students carried out fieldwork in Agra on which they based their whole year’s portfolio design work. As a result more accurate maps of the village were generated and ideas about improvements to sanitation, livelihoods and education were developed in student schemes. The students gained enormous educational benefit from the opportunity to practise techniques of investigation (architect as detective), narrative exposition (architect as narrator) and hands on working (architect as craftsperson) from first principles during this project (Mitchell, 2010).

The whole academic year of focused effort resulted in a live project in the summer of 2007, when ASD students installed the first internal toilets to a street in the village. The scheme is currently being followed up with the installation of a decentralised waste water treatment plant (DEWATS) to clean the village effluent.

## Architectural reach, funding and live projects

A pattern of engagement between Indian NGOs and some ASD studios is starting to emerge. Access to poor and marginal communities is facilitated by

local NGOs. Over a period of years, initiated by field work, which then forms the base to the design work of an academic year, a local development discourse is generated, encouraged and enriched by discussion. It is continuously referenced back to the host community and connected into global debates on change, resources, the green, humanitarian and development agendas and architecture. Brought to the attention of funders and other interested parties by publications, lectures and particularly the end of year show, this raised discourse then leads to live projects, further improving the quality and reach of architectural education at ASD. Polak (2009) remarks that:

*The majority of the world’s designers focus all their efforts on developing products and services for the richest 10% of the world’s customers. Nothing less than a revolution in design is needed to reach the other 90%.*

This statement is not specific to architects, but its sentiment seems particularly relevant to them. As architects we are concerned with the built environment and have the ability to influence practically every aspect of how people live their everyday lives. However, as pointed out by Architecture for Humanity (2006):

*... all too often architects are desperately needed in the places where they can be least afforded.*

To address this and to bring about the ‘revolution’ that Polak mentions, there needs to be a shift in priorities amongst our academic institutions to help ready more architectural students for practice where it really matters.



Live projects

ASD has made considerable progress in this regard but it is not alone. Live Project studios have run for a number of years in the United States and in Europe.

Design and Build Studios in deprived areas in the United States

Schools of architecture in the United States have led the way in developing the idea of Design and Build studios founded on the belief that construction should be an integral part of design. Carpenter (1997) explains that whilst architecture schools are often criticised for turning out architects who are unable to deal with pragmatic issues, construction studios offer a way to learn in a very practical sense without sacrificing the quality of design. Design and Build studios also allow pragmatic insights, discovered during the course of making, to improve that design quality. These US studios have an emphasis on craft and making, encouraging students to realise a built project.

In addition, most construction studios in the US have either started out or have evolved into community outreach programmes concentrating on the more deprived sectors of society. All these studios have gained sufficient presence within their chosen communities to be assured of willing clients and potential projects year after year. Students are attracted by the opportunity to build for real and make a tangible contribution to the local community. These studios are extremely popular as a result. Badanes (1997) who runs a Design and Build studio at the University of Washington explains that by



Student constructing prefabricated septic tank, Kuchhpura, Agra. Photo: Bo Tang

working for clients who would not normally have access to architects, students are exposed to the notion that the whole of society is our real client, not just the small percentage who can afford the fees. This, of course, has echoes of Polak’s 90% and finds common ground with these projects at ASD.

In the current economic recession, perhaps architects, now redundant, who are trained to be employed within the capital intensive sector of the building industry, should be looking elsewhere for meaningful employment: to Polak’s 90% where there is a massive need for architectural skills. To do so, however, the curricula of architectural schools would need to be expanded.

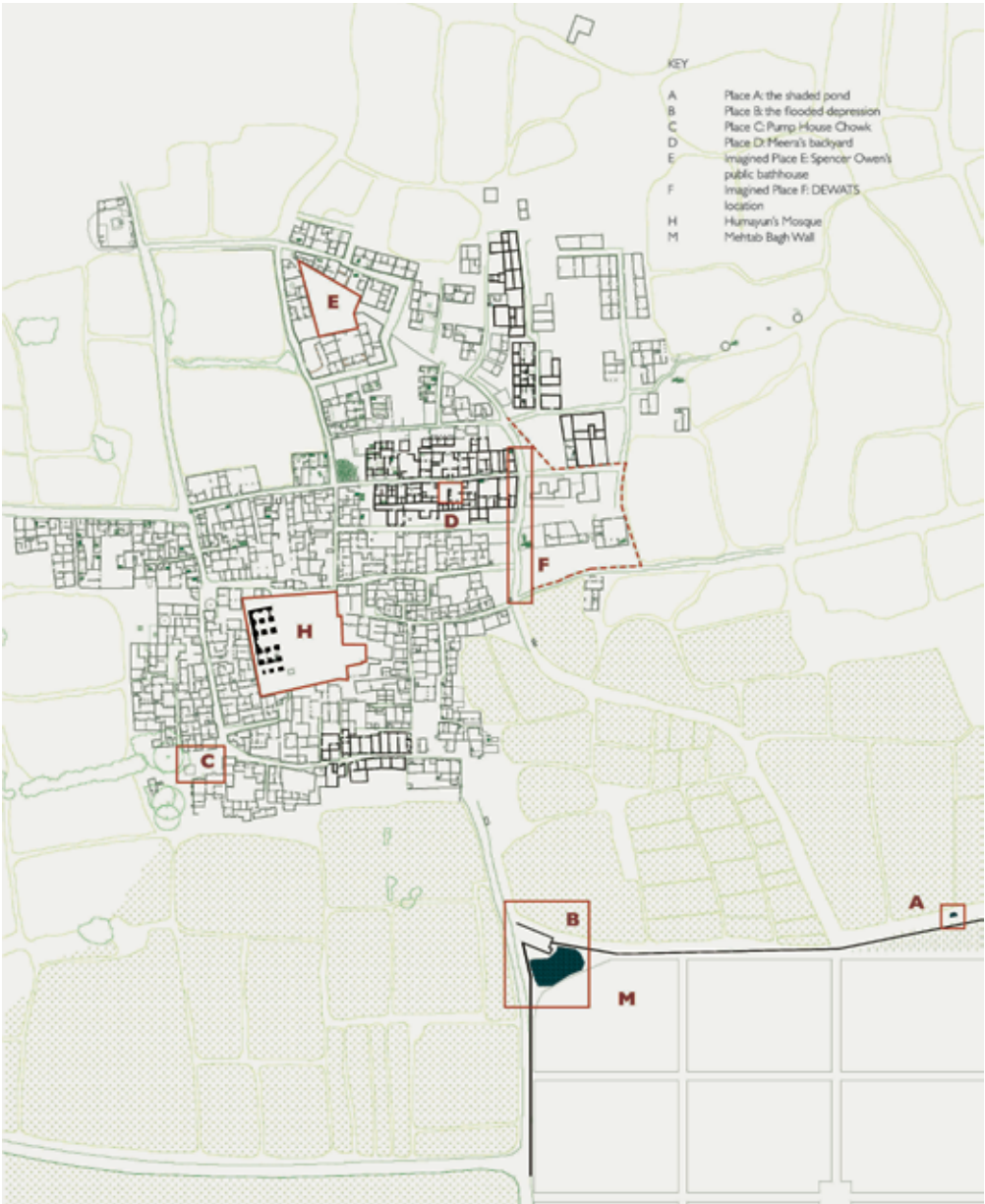
It would need to include the pragmatic, craft-led skill-set needed for work in resource scarce, rapidly changing situations. Perhaps such an approach, one of hand to eye intelligence, might transform attitudes towards design quality and spatial understanding.

It would also need to have access to the skills necessary to raise funds by balancing self-help, mutual aid and volunteering with philanthropic donations. Whereas both local and global NGOs working within the humanitarian sector have experience and can show the way to facilitate and enable community involvement, it is to the United States that we must look to show us how to fund raise. Most notable examples here are those of The Building Project at Yale University and of the Rural Studio at Auburn University.

Both studios have shown how, by expanding work steadily in an impoverished area over a number of years, students have become involved in ground-breaking work that is life-changing for both clients and students. Such quality projects can result in a momentum of goodwill that generates funding. To disseminate their work both studios have produced internationally promoted monographs of their work and have exhibited world-wide. Their success and considerable exposure have naturally attracted sponsors, making fundraising easier and created greater potential for new projects. Yale’s Building Project now has a long list of sponsors including Ikea, Dulux and Bosch. Rural Studio hosts scores of architectural tourists at Hale County and runs a multi-disciplinary outreach programme for non-architectural students to enable them to bring their skills to the studio’s projects.

The experience of the Austrian BASEhabitat studio in Bangaldesh

In their project for the Handmade School at Rudrapur, eight students from the BRAC University of Dhaka spent four months on site assisting with detailed design and construction and were joined by five students from BASEhabitat at the Kunstuniversitat Linz who flew out for one month of the build. By facilitating quality construction in traditional earth and bamboo the aim was to attach added value and pride to methods often viewed as inferior to the fired brick, concrete and steel that signify wealthier status. Herringner (2008) explains that:



Plan of Kuchhpura showing location of first street of internal toilets and new wastewater treatment plant (DEWATS). Studio Booklet 0607.

*The intention was to create an intercultural exchange with the expectation that the young architects will be able to carry their knowledge and skills to other regions of Bangladesh and the trained labour will be able to use their skills to build other modern mud houses in the region.*

Collaboration with a local school of architecture has several clear advantages. Apart from meaningful cultural exchanges between students, linguistic difficulties are reduced and there is exposure to different modes of study and practice in both directions. In practical terms European student involvement with the implementation of live projects is much simpler if a local school or architecture is a partner in the project. Local students are obviously able to spend much longer on site than European students and can provide much needed continuity for all phases of the project from initial survey through to construction and post-build assessments.

Curriculum

There are considerable difficulties in operating at some distance from the site location, especially if, as with these studios at ASD, a full range of students is involved from degree to diploma, MA and now PhD.; and especially if this involves integration with the requirements of local Schools of Architecture. Whilst all this integration of timetables and objectives is being arranged, it is also necessary to cast the net wide to find further appropriate projects and attract sufficient funding.

In such circumstances it is essential to have a curriculum which is flexible enough to take advantage of emerging project and funding opportunities and match these with current student energies and interests. At the same time they need to put the student through the hoops required by their home University’s examination process and professional validation.



The Austrian NGO S2ARCH provides just such a reliable source of funding and sources live projects with an unswerving social focus for seven European schools of architecture. To do this the NGO has a strong on-going relationship with townships around Johannesburg, South Africa. S2ARCH coordinates the schemes on site and offers additional design input throughout their progression. By working with several schools the NGO is able to complete a number of different building projects each year with each running to a fairly consistent academic programme and timescale.

Similarly the pre-condition for the success of the live project studios in the US is their well established and tailored course structure. The studios have bespoke curriculums that are moulded around the production of a community building. The project is not hemmed in by the need to complete other modules. Maximum time is given over to design development and on-site construction. All of the US schools have gained sufficient presence in their chosen communities to be assured of willing clients and potential projects year after year. Students are attracted by the opportunity to build and make a tangible contribution to a very local and scarcely resourced situation. These studios are, as a result, extremely popular.

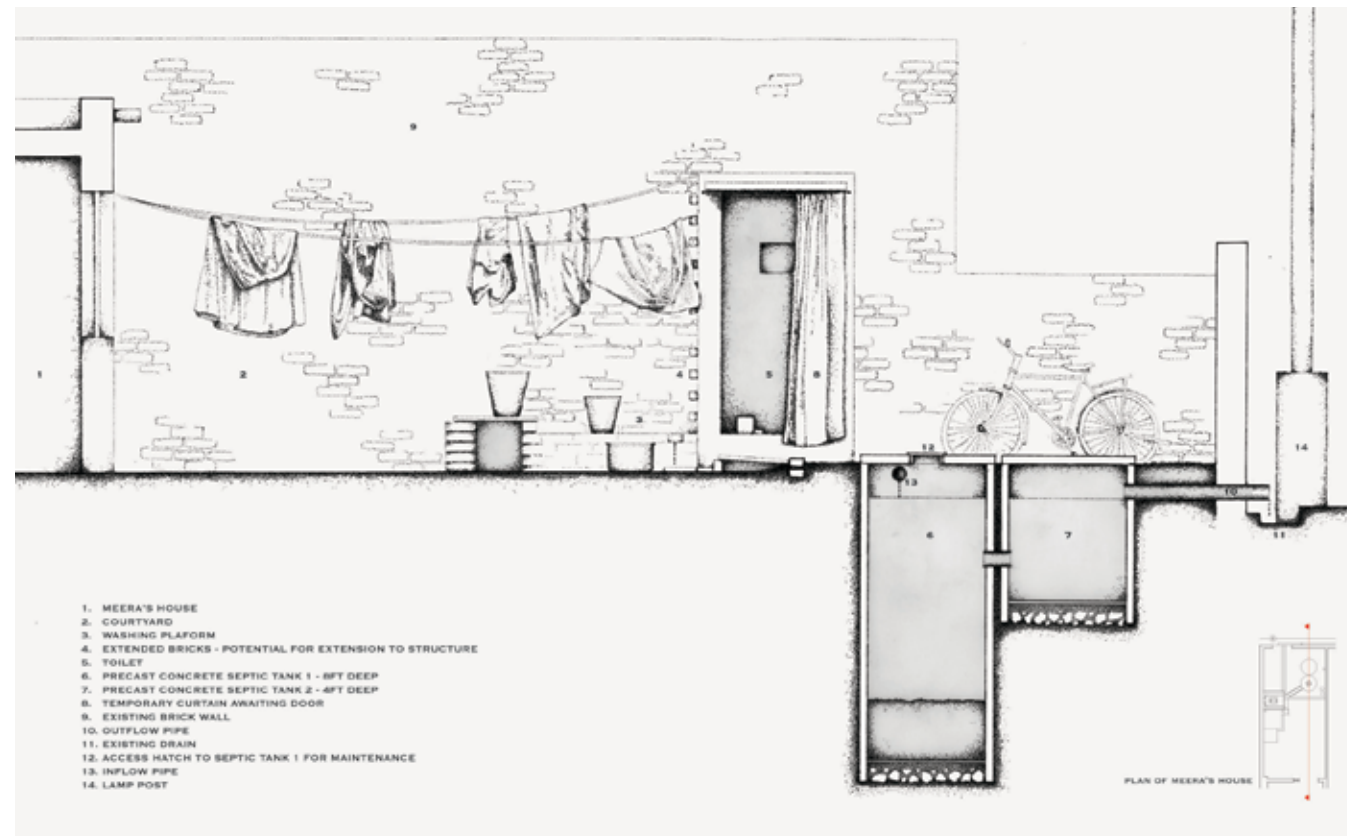
The opportunity to educate architects to link the hand with the eye, theory and practice in international live building projects challenges the architectural world to widen its focus. Change needs to come from within architecture schools as well as their validating bodies.

Fund raising and project finding may need to include several schools. Partnering agreements with local NGOs

need to be strengthened and extended to support long term associations. In this way ongoing live projects, which involve both students and under-resourced host communities in mutual learning and a steady improvement of the rapidly changing built environment, can proceed effectively.

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Section through installed septic tank providing internal toilet to Meera's house, Kuchhpura, Agra. Image: Bo Tang



# 7

## Building the Ark: Noah's Ark Nursery, Jouberton, Transvaal



## Department of Architecture and the Built Environment, University of Nottingham

Text by John Ramsay

The teaching and learning opportunities presented by the Social Architecture programme of the South African ‘not for gain’ charitable organisation Education Africa (EA) are considerable, and over the last decade a number of University Schools of Architecture from around the world have participated.

Education Africa has a continuing ambition to radically improve nursery level education in the townships and rural communities of South Africa. Primary school commences at seven years in the existing education process, and during the apartheid era pre-school education in deprived areas was virtually non-existent. This had a significant negative impact on the literacy and numeracy of children entering the school system, severely limiting their ability to progress beyond the most basic education. Through various programmes Education Africa is rapidly turning this around; one of the most visible is the Social Architecture programme.

Under the programme, University Schools of Architecture can volunteer to participate in the building of a pre-school education facility in a location identified by EA’s team. It is the University’s responsibility to raise funds for the construction and to meet logistical costs such as transport, although EA will assist with accommodation and local infrastructural needs. A local partner is also identified, as well as potential sponsorship.

In the summer of 2008 the University of Nottingham Department of Architecture & Built Environment (DA+BE) committed to undertake one of these projects, led by the studio coordinator for the second year of the B.Arch course, Adrian Friend.

The project selected was in a small community called Jouberton, the township of the mining centre

Klerksdorp, that lies a couple of hours drive south west of Johannesburg, in the Transvaal. Jouberton is the birthplace of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who lived there until he was twelve years old.

The requirements were simple: three classrooms, an office and kitchen, a covered external area for eating and toilets. This sounds rather modest, but the facilities that these simple buildings replace are sometimes little more than a single-roomed tin shack with no water and only very rarely electricity supplied by a single wire slung from a nearby building.

Enthusiasm for the project was understandably very high. The entire second year, some 180 or more Year 2 undergraduates, were asked to participate in an initial concept design competition for the building during the first semester (from September to December, 2009). This was organised in a number of stages, eventually resulting in a preferred scheme, after rounds of voting, analysis and refinement.

In the first part of the second semester (January to Easter) the selected design was subjected to a ‘rationalization’ process, led by the module convenor for the Part III course, John Edmonds, an experienced practicing architect, assisted by a small group of Year 5 (first year of Part 2 Diploma) postgraduate students. This team worked with the studio unit who designed the building to simplify construction and produce a full set of working drawings.

The construction was carried out over a seven week period that included the Easter break, by a team comprising of second year and fifth year students and a small number of staff, led by Adrian Friend and John Edmonds. Additionally many of the construction tasks

Opening image: variations in the frame geometry required accurate measurement and drilling of bolt-holes. Without the use of scale models and test runs during the design development many of the construction processes would have been difficult to solve on-site. Photo: John Edmonds; right: ‘Noah’s Ark’ has been described by Education Africa as ‘raising the bar’ of their Social Architecture initiative, and is now also being used as a training facility for nursery teachers. Photo: Education Africa); far right: one year on and the building is performing well, despite the extreme climate fluctuating from very hot summers to very wet winters. Photo: John Ramsay



Frames prefabricated by students in a local building yard were erected by crane and the frame was completed a bay at a time. Test runs for prefabrication were carried out in Nottingham to prove the construction method. Photo: John Edmonds

needed the support or participation of local contractors, such as the reinforced concrete raft and the supply of lifting equipment. At Jouberton generous support was provided by the principal local employer, the mining company Anglo Gold Ashanti. Unemployed local people were also given the opportunity to help build the school, and worked alongside the student team. Local builders provided space in one of their buildings for the prefabrication of roof trusses; a neighbour was paid to supply electricity to the site from the supply in his corrugated tin and breeze block house!

The site was originally a local rubbish tip, and had to be cleared by the students before work could commence. Conditions were difficult – Easter time is autumn in South Africa and sudden heavy rain is common. It was also very hot in the afternoons, so the provision of shade and water was essential.

A number of in-situ modifications were made to the design based on the availability of materials. One great discovery was the local system of sand-bag wall construction, which proved to be a very effective alternative to concrete blocks. Roofing details were modified according to the available sheeting profiles; the required fan-shape was achieved by the novel technique

of flattening profiled sheets by driving a pick-up truck (or ‘Bakkie’ as they are known locally) over selected areas! A popular local roofing material, bitumen impregnated corrugated fibreboard, was used in lieu of steel profiled sheet for wall cladding – it is easier to handle and cut, without exposed sharp edges around doors and windows. Timber frames were protected from termite attack using creosote at ground level, a substance that is now restricted in the UK, but is a very effective deterrent to these extremely destructive insects.

Live projects of this nature are perhaps better suited to smaller schools of architecture – it would of course be impractical logistically and financially to take 180 students to South Africa and the size of the projects would not require a construction team anything like this size. The selection process runs the risk of engendering disappointment amongst the majority of those participating. In an ideal world all students should have the chance to do a live construction project, and the DA+BE are currently exploring the pedagogy of ‘design-build studio’ (as it is known in the United States) to find ways of expanding it within the B.Arch course.

The Education Africa project for 2010/11, at Calais Village in Limpopo Province, will involve only one



quarter of the second year (now numbering around 200 undergraduates); all of those who are participating are volunteers and have committed to fund-raise over the summer of 2010. All of these students will work on the project in South Africa next Easter. Two teams, each of approximately twenty-five students, will share the construction over eight weeks.

Health and Safety is clearly of great importance. Building is by its very nature a risky business, and students with a few exceptions lack the strength, experience and skills of the seasoned construction worker. All students must be trained in the use of power tools, ladders and lifting, as well as the basic common sense of 'site safety'. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) must be provided and worn (not always the comfortable option in South Africa). The Nottingham DA+BE is currently introducing industry recognised training and registration on site safety for all undergraduates in the B.Arch and M.Eng courses, to facilitate the incorporation of live-build projects into the curriculum.

Expectations and the norms of construction site safety vary from country to country, and are certainly more relaxed in South Africa than in the UK. We should however recognise that these projects have very significant benefits for the teaching institution in terms of publicity, quite apart from the obvious benefits for the communities and for the participating students. To maximize the publicity benefit from these projects institutions must recognise how important it is that students are seen in photographs and video to be acting in a safe and responsible manner, and that no avoidable risks exist. We must practice and preach the standards we would expect from the industry. It is quite often the case that the step from carrying out small constructions as part of an architecture course to the proper application of 'design build studio' is perceived to be difficult because of the need to apply much more rigorous standards of safety and training. These are however essential and routine in the industry we are training students to enter.

Funding and cost control are also areas where careful management is required. Construction costs in South Africa are generally low, and the buildings should

avoid unnecessary complexity – a township nursery does not require a sophisticated programme. One of the advantages of the EA Social Architecture programme is that it allows projects that are larger than could be achieved for the same budget in the UK. The logistical costs should not be underestimated – accommodation, flights, vehicle hire and food for the team can be substantial. All primary funding is raised by the undergraduates themselves, using various ingenious fund raising initiatives.

The need to improvise in the field can lead to additional costs, and advanced intelligence about the available construction materials in the immediate vicinity of the site is vital. Most of the materials are procured as required, locally. A fairly sophisticated range of building materials are available in almost every community, as self-build is usual, but they are suited to the locally preferred techniques and needs, and to the available production skills. A good example is the steel framed, single-glazed window, which is easily produced in a society where metal fabrication is a common skill due to the predominance of the mining industry.

The issue of liability post-construction is often raised as an obstacle to live-build studio projects. The parent institution must be prepared to fully support the project in terms of indemnity insurance; to facilitate this any final design must meet the normal rigorous requirements in terms of structural design, compliance with standards and good practice. The DA+BE at the University of Nottingham will from the beginning of next academic year operate live build projects, such as the South African work with Education Africa, under the supervision of a Projects Office, which will be an RIBA Chartered Practice, carrying PII and supplying experienced support from registered professionals.

The Social Architecture programme is just one of Education Africa's many excellent causes. We were delighted to discover when we revisited Jouberton this year that the nursery, which has been renamed 'Noah's Ark' by the local families, is now also being used by EA as a training facility for nursery teachers. The building is popular with its community and is surviving the sometimes harsh environment well. It is described by Education Africa as 'raising the bar' for future projects.

The opportunity to work on a real project in a community where the need is so apparent is a fantastic experience for all students (and academics) who are involved. The combination of design, construction, social impact and fascinating location is extremely rich in teaching and learning possibilities. The live-build initiatives at the University of Nottingham are ambitious, but the benefits are the vivid, real-life and real architecture skills and experiences that our graduates will carry into their careers.



Selected scheme from student design project  
Photo: Will Gowling, University of Nottingham

## 8

# Live projects abroad: Building networks for internationalisation





# The School of Architecture, University of Sheffield

Text by Leo Care, Prue Chiles & Doina Petrescu

Our intention with the live projects programme at the Sheffield School of Architecture has been to extend the horizons of our students through developing internationally connected projects. A decade on, and with over a hundred projects successfully undertaken, the programme has worked within ten countries throughout Europe, Africa and Asia (Fig. 1).

Many projects are also Sheffield-based, engaging with communities, charities and agencies locally – setting a collaborative design agenda. Other projects have spanned the regions, focused on different cities across the UK. In particular, the experience of undertaking live projects abroad has evidenced the importance of establishing a network of organisations, not just to facilitate project delivery, but to develop academic connections, and to ensure that projects are embedded in their physical, social and organisational context.

The live projects are distinctive in several ways that perhaps makes them particularly suited to internationalisation; firstly they are not always about realising architectural endeavour through built examples. Many projects focus on more polemical or research-based questions. ‘Human urine in mud brick construction’ is an example of this, where students



Figure 1: Map of live project locations abroad. Image: BDR

undertook a research project into the possibilities of using urine in making mud-based bricks and building blocks. The aim of the project was to use this adapted technology in countries where water was scarce and precious resources could be retained for drinking whilst human waste could be usefully harnessed. In particular this method of construction was designed to be employed in refugee camps as an alternative to temporary tent structures in arid regions (Fig.2). The project, commissioned by Architects for Aid has been important in:

*Using architectural intelligence to help and empower people who would not otherwise have access to design and research input.* (Jack Pringle, *Trustee, Architects for Aid* – cited in ‘Using human urine in mud brick construction’, 2007, University of Sheffield)

Secondly, the projects are driven by students. Students have mentors within the project (rather than tutors) who try not to steer projects, but who are there to guide them and ensure a link between student and client. Past and present students also inaugurate their own live projects, tapping into support and learning within the programme and providing a springboard for their own initiatives. Two students that founded Voluntary Design and Build (VD&B) enabled the construction of Tarlungeni Children’s Centre in Romania through the Live Project programme, running in consecutive years between 2006–08. The project was supported by FAST, a Romanian charity set up to help underprivileged families in the Brasov Region. Students engaged with the project during holiday periods in addition to the usual six week Live Project format, leading to a number of students working in the same country through connections made during the project. This type of project has led to students working with organisations like Article 25 and Architecture Sans Frontières. Their experiences are often fed-back through their written dissertations, providing a valuable experience-based resource for others to draw on (Fig.3).

In the aforementioned projects, the importance of establishing international networks and students understanding how they could draw-upon and engage with the stakeholders within this network were fundamental. One of the first activities undertaken within most live projects is the creation of a stakeholder map, a visual representation of the networks established within the project and a continually updated diagram of the connections and relationships within the project. This is primarily produced for students to understand the various people and their roles within the project, but it is also a dynamic tool for all stakeholders to understand and

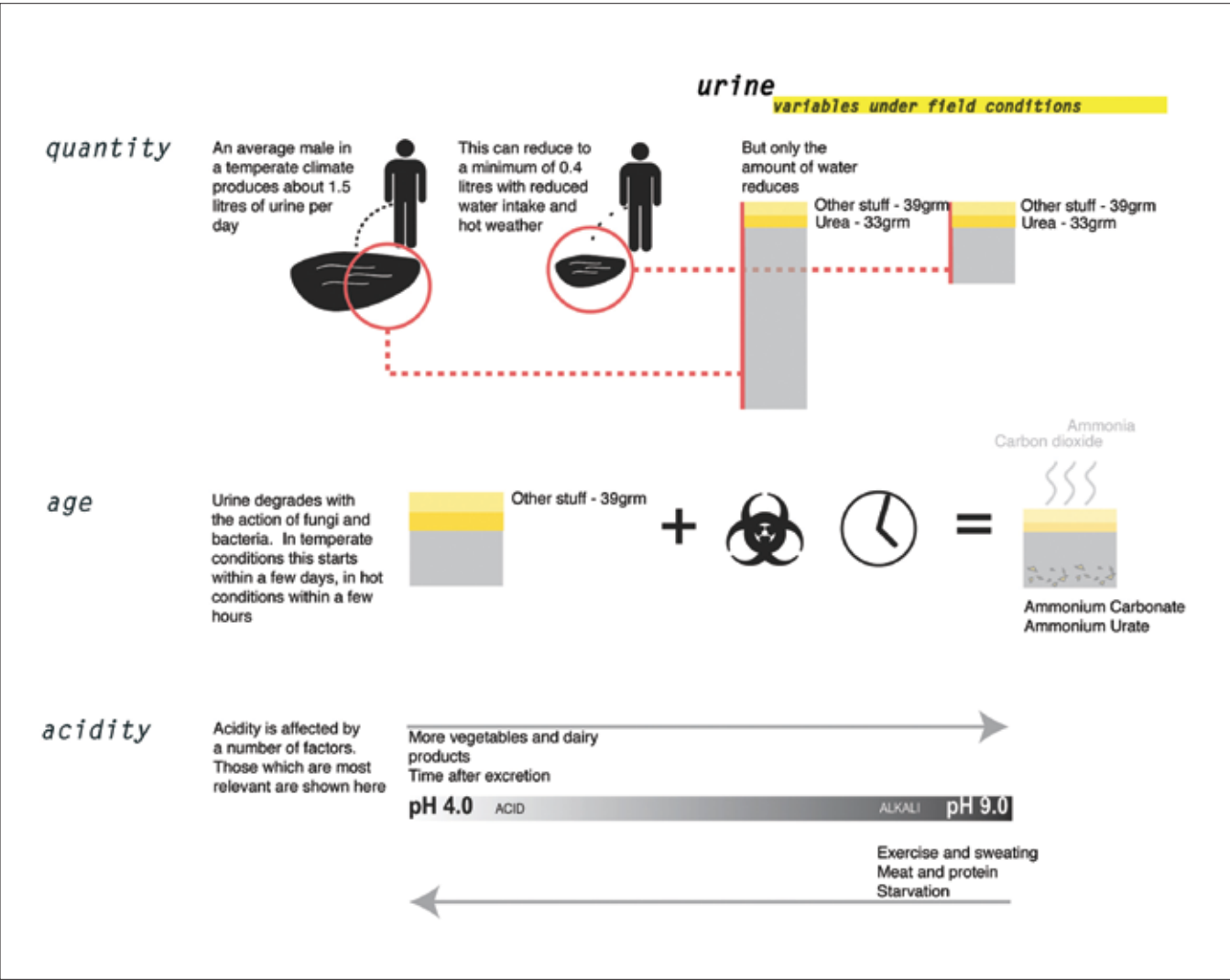


Figure 2: Analysis of human urine and its salient properties for use in construction. Image by the Urine Live Project Group, University of Sheffield

use. Stakeholder maps are even more important in an international context, where good communication is vital and understanding of each other’s roles within projects becomes more difficult to understand and define (Fig.4).

Live Project international networks include a diverse range of organisations; Governments, NGOs, other universities, artists and charities. Together, these stakeholders or actors contribute to the transference of knowledge. This is important in ensuring that a project is not a worthy pursuit or seen as an aid project involving parachuting in seemingly advanced skills and knowledge to a place of need.

The following three sample projects exemplify our approaches, highlighting projects that have different aims, whether to practically realise architecture or to form part of a large European research project. The common strand in each is the importance of an international network to provide a stable, yet creative, platform for the projects.

## Rhyzom

Three recent live projects have been connected via the Agency Research Centre in Sheffield to an EU funded network called ‘Rhyzom’ which conducts research into local culture and trans-local dissemination across Europe (see [www.rhyzom.net](http://www.rhyzom.net)). The clients were three of the partners of the Rhyzom network: PS2 in Belfast, Cultural Agencies in Istanbul and Atelier d’Architecture Autogérée (AAA) in Paris. All three live projects were concerned with a specific type of local cultural production (i.e. cultural practice at the border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, cultural agencies within the context of urban struggles in a suburb of Istanbul, ecological developments of self-managed cultural initiatives in Paris) and addressed the issues through different methodologies; exploratory mapping, consultation and construction work. Beyond the live projects framework, the students were given the opportunity to contribute to the research outputs of the Rhyzom project; debates, exhibitions and publications (Fig. 6).





Figure 3: Students constructing the Tarlungeni Children's Centre Romania Photo: the live project group, University of Sheffield

Cité de femmes

Collaboration with REFDAF (Réseau des femmes pour un développement durable en Afrique) a West African women's network based in Dakar

In 2004 students conducted a Live Project to accompany a self-build housing project Cité de femmes (The Women's City) run by a women's group belonging to REFDAF. The Live Project had two parts: the first part based in Sheffield which focused on fundraising and the setting of a database on self-building techniques and recycled materials affordable in Senegal, and a second part based in Dakar, which took the form of a construction workshop (opening image). This was the occasion for students and women involved in the project to experiment with selected self-building techniques and materials for the construction of the future houses in the Cité de femmes. Several prototypes of walls, roofs and closures using local and recycled materials (i.e. tin cans, tyres, bottles, sand bags) were realised on site and inspired the further constructions of the Cité de femmes. The work has been exhibited at the Rotterdam Biennale of Architecture in 2009 and featured in numerous publications (i.e. *Recycle, The Essential Guide*, Black Dog, 2006; *Material Matters*, Routledge, 2007).

Pukhtoon schools project

UK – Afghanistan – Pakistan

Following a visit to the bordering regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan, Ramon Mohamed, a dual-heritage primary school teacher from Sheffield approached the School of Architecture to help address the real need for school buildings that he encountered. In his ambition to see the lives of young people in the cultural Pukhtoon regions transformed through access to education, Ramon

had made contact with many different people and organisations who were captivated by his story and keen to be involved. By offering our services as architects, facilitators and teachers the primary activity has been to establish and create the network links between interested people (Fig. 5).

The initial phase of the project is designed to create a dialogue between school children, teachers and parents in the UK, Pakistan and Afghanistan, on which a design brief for a school pilot project could be based. The second phase of the project is focused on designing and building a prototype school, which presents a huge challenge in such a remote location. The ongoing conflict in Afghanistan impacts on the deliverability of the Project, but also on children's day-to-day lives, with school lessons (undertaken in the open air) being interrupting by bombing in the surrounding area!

The establishment of a network is fundamental in order to overcome these huge issues. Already the project network has developed to include a range of organisations; Mardan University, within the Pukhtoon region, has offered land to build a prototype school on, with the aim of improving their community outreach programme and creating links to their teacher training courses. The Vice Chancellor of Mardan University is visiting Sheffield in the Autumn to develop links and discuss further involvement in the project. A proposed spin-off to the school building project is to enable Pakistani students to undertake scholarships in Sheffield, further reinforcing the international exchange of knowledge.

WADAN (The Welfare Association for the Development of Afghanistan) work in the region on community development and drug control programmes, focused on educating communities in the region. They are all too aware of the need for school buildings and facilities, but building schools is not their core activity. However, WADAN offer knowledge of the local area and the day-to-day issues of working with communities in Afghanistan. Other contacts include a building contractor based in Afghanistan with experience of school building, and the Pakistan-based Refugee Camp for Afghans. In the UK, a number of schools have offered their support. Workshops have been undertaken at Thetford School



Figure 4: Stakeholder map being developed for the Eco Roof project in Paris. Photo: the Eco Roof Live Project Group, University of Sheffield

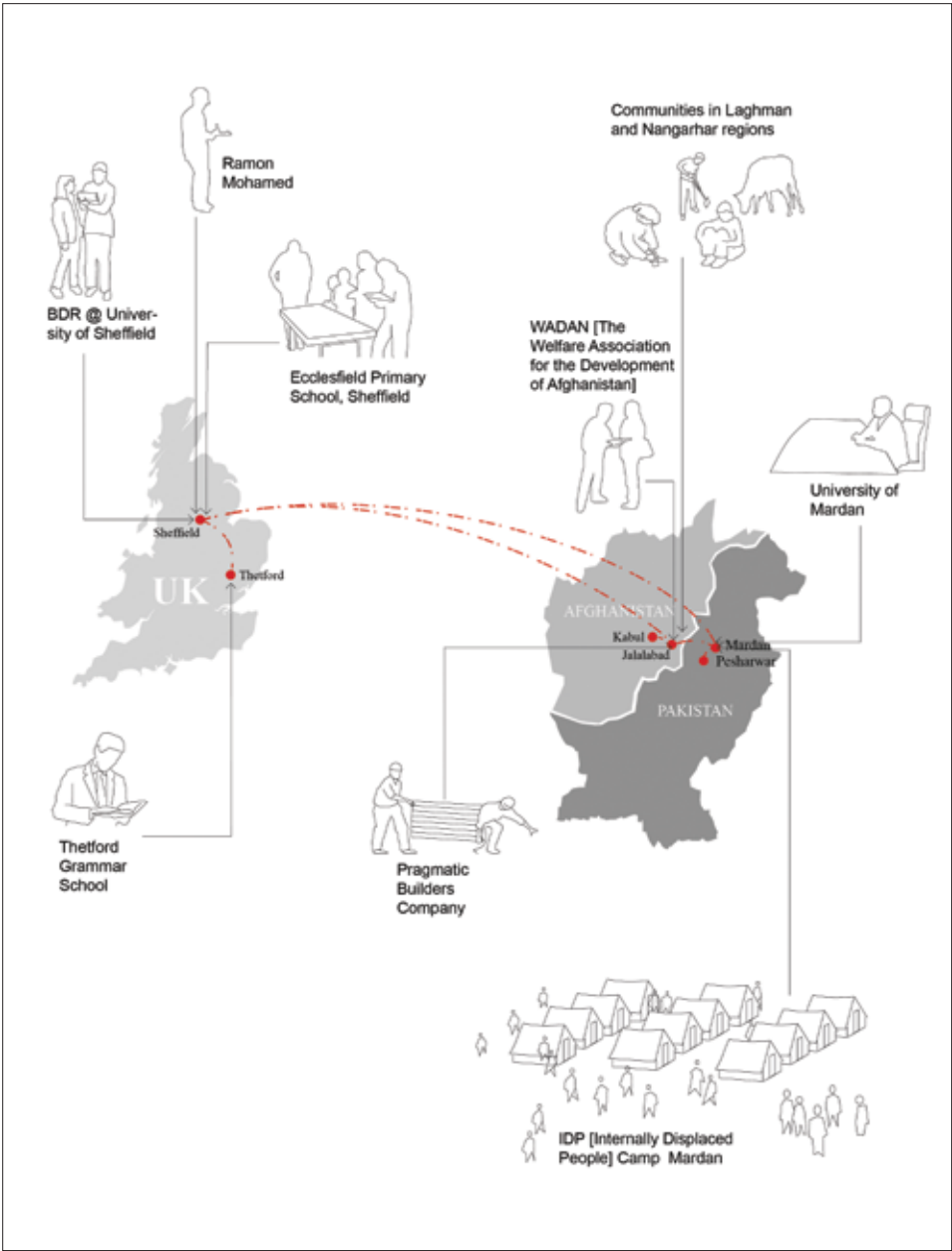


Figure 5: Network diagram for the Pukhtoon Schools Project. Image: BDR

and Ecclesfield Primary School to start the exploration of shared notions of learning and to develop a series of issues that need to be communicated to communities in the Pukhtoon region in ways that will enable them to understand and buy-in to the project, whilst helping to embed their needs for a school.

Sustainability of live projects

The potential to share lessons learned through the internationalisation of live projects is to a large degree untapped within the School of Architecture. Capturing the tacit knowledge of groups involved in such projects is manifest through a written management submission, but there remains an opportunity to develop a wider forum

for discussion and dissemination of knowledge. It is hoped that this will be enhanced through a Live Project publication that the school is currently developing.

One of the limitations of the live project Programme at Sheffield is the six week time period in which the projects run. In terms of working internationally this places huge pressure on working efficiently and effectively to achieve the project goals within the allotted time. When the programme is completed and the students leave, there is the potential for projects to end and further opportunities missed. Tapping into and forming networks is particularly important, to ensure that there are groups of people on the ground who have the skills and means to continue the projects. With this organisational infrastructure in place students can also return of their own volition for further involvement.



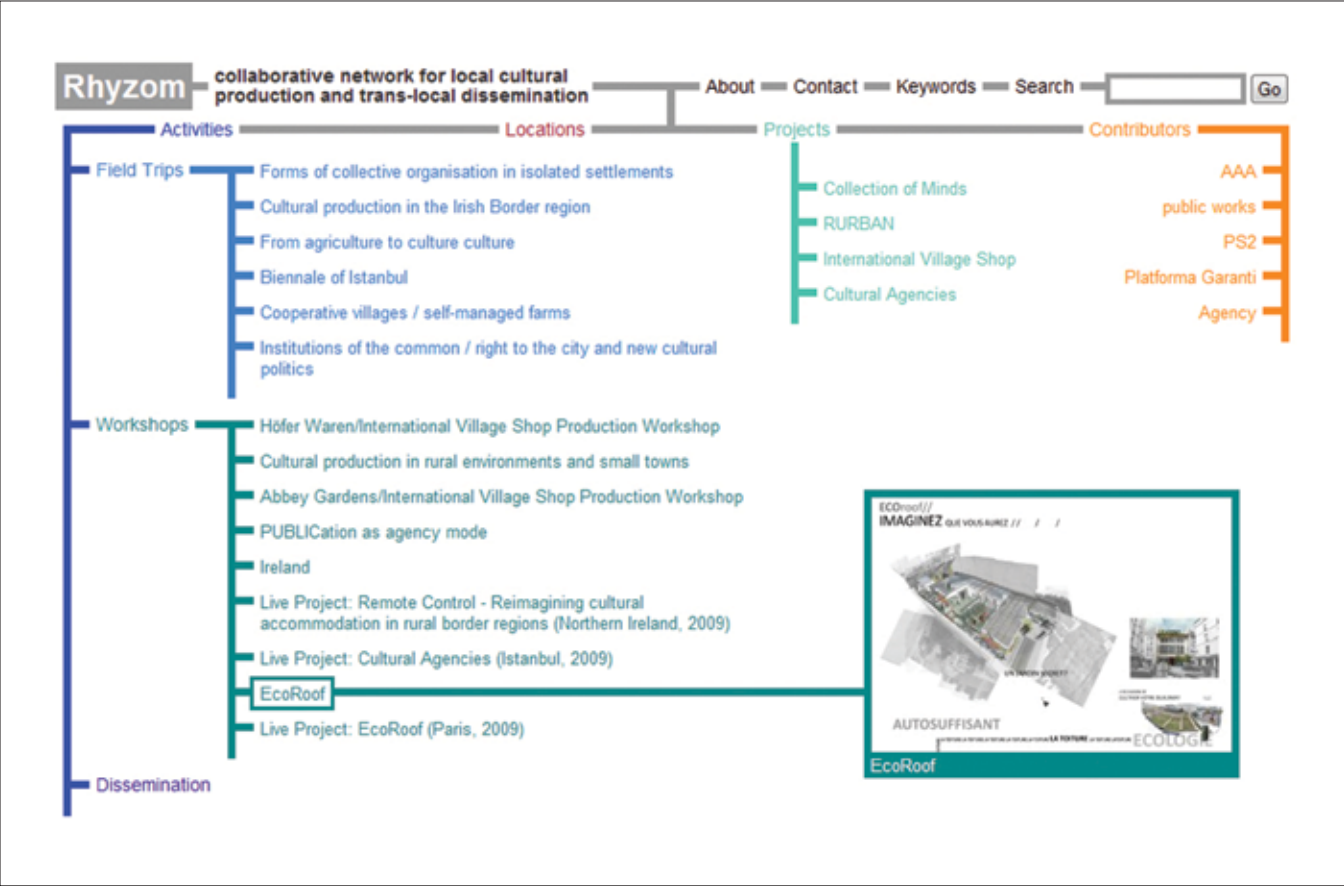


Figure 6: Snapshot of the Rhyzom homepage, highlighting the network of organisations involved and outputs from the project. Website by Dorian Moore

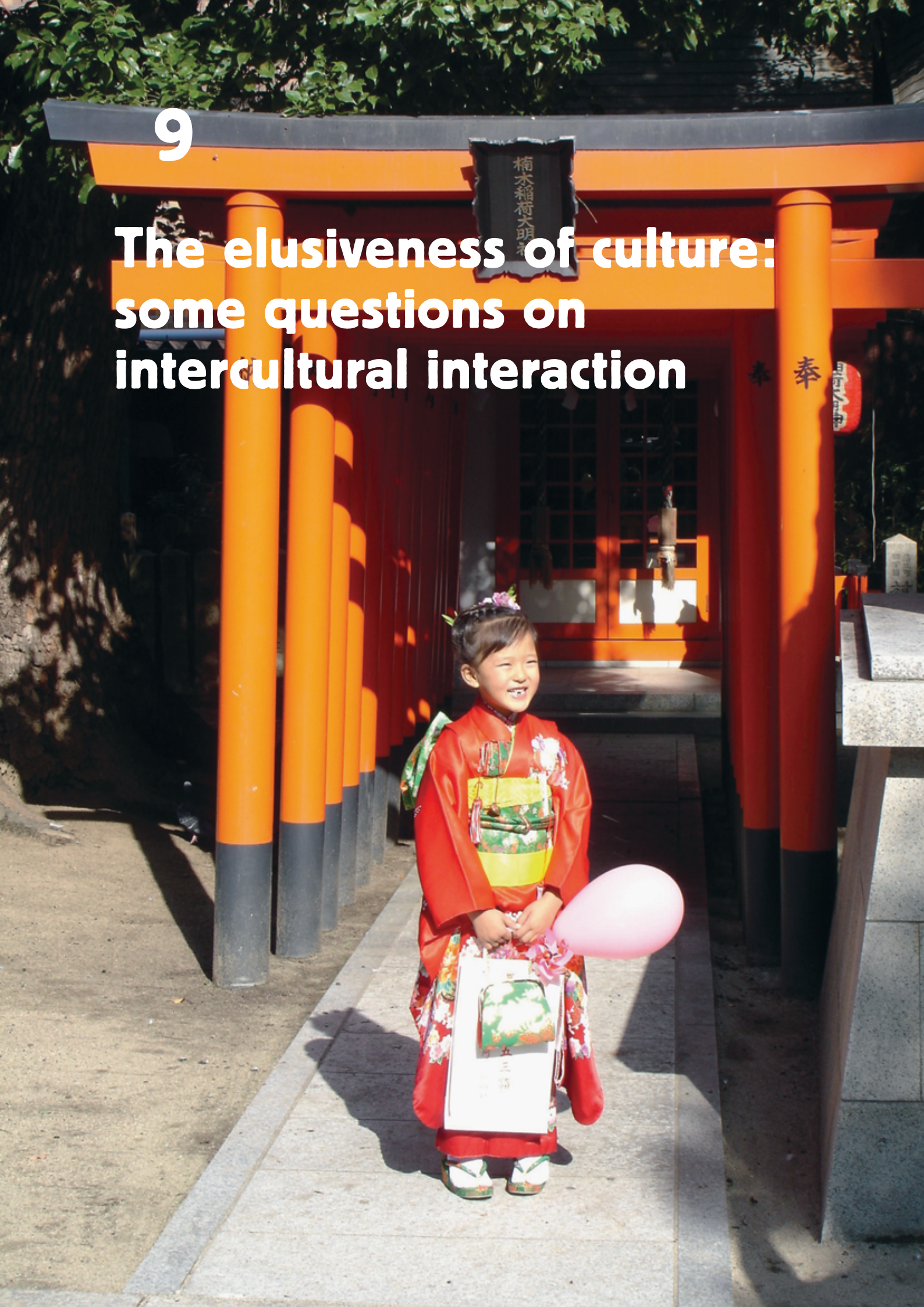
On completion of their studies many students have felt stifled by the current climate of UK architectural practice and see working in other countries as a way to learn at firsthand about the implications of their design skills and the potential they have to make a difference to people. The strength of networks established through live projects often means that there are real opportunities to further their involvement, providing a much-needed outlet for creative talent.

Without the establishment of a network of stakeholders and actors within a project, there is a real danger that projects become more about ‘students abroad’, working in a worthy manner, without understanding the wider context of their situation and implications of their actions. The networks are therefore crucial to sustaining a meaningful long-term project that has the potential to be a more sustainable endeavour.

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Opening image: Construction Workshop in Dakar, 2004. Photo: D. Petrescu





# School of Architecture and Design, University of Plymouth

Text by Robert Brown

## Abstract

Education carried out in the context of intercultural interaction, while offering pedagogic benefits and founded upon a laudable ethical ethos, is problematic. This paper sheds light on this condition through a lens of examining the phrase intercultural interaction itself, and in particular the word culture embedded in it. Working across cultural boundaries raises questions about our assumptions of culture, notably about a tendency to fix cultures as people, place and time-specific. Equally problematic in engaging with another culture is a tendency to project onto it readings of authenticity that are in effect an imposition upon that culture. The site of one recent design studio-based project is used to illustrate these concerns.

## Introduction

That we live in an increasingly connected world is an acknowledged condition of contemporary life. It follows that architectural education must explicitly engage with this context, though it is equally recognised that distinct benefits accrue from such interaction, notably in terms of education and efficacy for those participating. Intercultural interaction does however pose significant challenges to not only our ways of working, but more significantly for our ways of thinking and understanding of context. Indeed, the phrase intercultural interaction, and more specifically the word culture embedded within it, are themselves reflective of the nature of the difficulties that can be encountered. This paper examines common understandings of the construct of culture in order to discern what it reveals about a few challenges of intercultural interaction in education.

This paper should not however be perceived as a negative stance towards such pedagogy; rather, the intention is to draw attention to issues which while intrinsic to intercultural interaction, might be overlooked and thus not critically considered and which, if left unexamined, might lead to difficulties in projects set in the context of intercultural interaction.

Opening image: Japan as other: an image to fit our preconceptions. But how common is these scene and the child's attire in the everyday? (Shichi-go-san Ceremony, Osaka, Japan). Photo: Bob Brown

## The difficulty of ‘culture’ as a construct

As evidenced by the case studies presented at the SCHOSA conference in spring 2008 which underpins CEBE’s investigation of intercultural interaction, there is an implied sense that intercultural interaction in an educational context is about working across national boundaries. This impression suggests common definitions of the word culture, which in typical usage refers to the general achievements, attitudes, behaviours, beliefs, characteristics, conventions, customs, goals, institutions, knowledge, material traits, practices and/or values shared by a particular people in a particular place and at a particular time (i.e. another country). Entailed within this is a proposition that in interacting with another culture, we are encountering and engaging with an identifiable set of conditions which define that culture. Yet if we interrogate culture more thoroughly both as a construct and in praxis, we find that though seemingly obvious, it is not so definitive, and thus problematic.

As suggested by the above, a common (and uncritical) reading of culture correlates with three key attributes: i.e., that it is specific to a distinctive group of people; to an identifiable place, and to a marked time. Each of these qualities in turn is grounded in long-standing disciplinary-based definitions of culture. The first understands culture as the way of life of a particular people. (Mathews 2000), and that this way of life is commonly shared amongst those people. The second contends that culture is spatially constituted; i.e., it has a geographic dimension (Jackson, 1989). In this sense, culture has an inherent spatial contiguity and is part of a local, as opposed to a more universal, condition. The third considers culture as chronologically stable; i.e., drawing upon Massey (2005, p.69), cultural history is conceptualised as a ‘linear and evolutionary series of events’ unrelated to other temporal trajectories.

Identifying the specificity intrinsic to the above is however an elusive endeavour. As we investigate the construct of culture further, and more notably any culture in which we may be working, we find ourselves left with questions of which people, in which place and at which time.

To expand on this questioning, we tend to accord the culture of a particular people a sense of authenticity; i.e., that it is a true reflection originating in their way of life. Unacknowledged in such an assumption is that culture does not merely evolve spontaneously from a set of naturally occurring processes, but rather is constructed both unconsciously and purposefully. Though outside the scope of this paper, examples worth briefly noting



England? America? Or downtown Tokyo? (Meiji-Dori neighbourhood, Tokyo). Photo: Robert Brown

here include the Japanese government’s actions following the Meiji Restoration in 1853 to articulate and propagate a shared sense of Japanese identity; a more malevolent example is found in the post-war South African government’s efforts to foster the expression of distinct cultural identities for indigenous peoples, in order to support its apartheid policies of segregation. Upon examination we find that culture is not ideologically neutral, but rather that it is a politically and socially loaded idea; echoing Happauf’s (2005) discussion of *heimat*, when interrogated we find that what we might identify as the true essence of a culture has instead been subject to manipulation through the intervention of parties with vested interests.

Further questions are raised in examining the attributes of place, notably in the context of a globalising world. As Castells (1996) and Mathews (2000) argue, definitions of the local have changed through the impact of globalization. We now understand that spatial constructs of culture are subject to significant shifts, and that what was once a local phenomenon is now attainable instantaneously anywhere via physical and virtual networks. Equally damning are critiques of regionalist models which challenge the prioritization of some mythologized sense of the local (Dovey 1999; Frampton 1986; Lefavre & Tzonis 2003). Moreover, arguments on both ‘super-modernity’ and ‘non-places’, and the sense of speed, transience and de-territorialisation they present, have eroded traditional understandings of place. Indeed, the viability of the local has been called into question, as modernity has brought a sense of dislocation form any normative sense of place (Kimberly Dovey, cited in Roderick 1995), while Hardt and Negri (2000) contest that the dialectic of inside and outside no longer exists.

The issue of time and culture is equally problematic. Bozdogan notes a tendency to presume that the determinants that inform cultures are fixed, particularly in a predisposition of the West to see non-Western cultures as ‘... bounded domains, i.e., as authentic and timeless traditions with internally consistent essences (1999, p.210).’ Bhabba adds that such preconception overlooks the diversity and flux which exists within cultures and that all cultures are ‘continually in a process of hybridity’ (1990; cited in Menon 2001, p.210). Fixing culture to a particular time fails to understand it as an active, adaptive, creative and evolving process.

Also worth noting is that what is defined as authentic local culture (often positioned and celebrated as being in opposition to external forces) is often imposed from the outside. The non-native sees what they want to see, with little consideration given to local circumstances, operations or perceptions (Eggener 2002). Doing so reflects Auge’s critique of ethnologists, who delineate signifying spaces which reflect as much as anything ethnologists’ own ideological conceptions (1995). This warning is mirrored by Eggener (2002), who cautions against outsiders’ appropriation and celebration of what they have defined as the true ‘local’ identity; such impositions constitute a form of ‘intellectual imperialism’, notably when extended to its extreme and indigenous voices are silenced. (Spivak 1990).

Perhaps most problematic in this examination of culture is the word authentic. It is a concept that comes up consistently in references to intercultural interaction, notably in a desire to identify and work with the authentic culture of a people and place. Since at least Vitruvius such aspirations have been invested in some local condition and tradition uncovered by a particular author or architect. In common usage we understand



authentic as ‘real, true’ (Cambridge Online Dictionary 2009, ‘authentic’) and ‘of undisputed origin, genuine, made or done in the traditional or original way’ (Pearsall 1998, p.113). The authentic is however an elusive construct. This in-definitiveness was exposed in Peter Blundell Jones’ (1991a, 1991b, 1991c and 1992) essay ‘In Search of Authenticity’; Jones concluded that an absolute sense of the authentic may be unobtainable, owing to selective (and various and repeated) manipulations of form, tectonics and meaning. This elusiveness is exposed through further interrogation; indeed, authentic can also be not the original itself, but rather ‘in a way that faithfully resembles the original’ (Pearsall 1998, p.113). Authentic can further be based in belief, that is, ‘what people say it is’ (Cambridge Online Dictionary 2009, ‘authentic’). In effect then, the authentic can be whatever you want it to be.

Such definitions evoke Jackson’s (1982, p.2) contention that culture is not only ‘...the way the social relations of a group are structured and shaped: but it is also the way those shapes are experienced, understood and interpreted.’ Mathews (2002) extends this argument in his thesis of the global cultural supermarket, in which as individuals we have both the opportunity and increasing inclination to selectively determine our own distinctive identity by appropriating that which we want to make our own. Thus, if enough people choose to believe in a certain sense of cultural identity, then this alone makes it ‘real enough’ to be granted validity.

What we are left with then is a condition of relativity; but can everything be relative? Such readings give weight to Rapoport’s (1986) argument that the term culture itself is too broad for it to be a workable concept, and that more definable, operational components of culture should be used. While use of the term is difficult, it is still viable to recognize how the term is used and understood within the local context, caution is however clearly and unambiguously needed where totalizing definitions are applied.

## The difficulty of ‘culture’ in practice

To illustrate this condition, this paper will briefly allude to the cultural context of one design studio project, set in Riga, Latvia. The story of Riga is one of multiple narratives inscribed by the various invading and occupying forces which have ruled Riga. From first German crusaders, and later through Polish, Swedish, Russian, Latvian, Soviet, German (again), Soviet (again), to most recently and once again, Latvian rule, the city has been imprinted upon by disparate authors. This external influence continues today in the relatively recent rush of Western European investment which followed independence in 1991, and the even more recent pursuit of trade opportunities with the East. The multiplicity of Riga is further represented in its multi-ethnic population, in which Latvians remain a minority.

Further compelling are the attempts by changing authorities to articulate their own respective singular narrative. Over the last seventy years this has included the post-war Soviet’s imposed modernist narrative of the socialist industrial city, and two later, simultaneously competing and supporting narratives which arose with independence in 1991. One sought to resurrect Latvian national identity, notably through removing the most visible signs of the Soviet occupation. The other arose with Riga’s embrace of the money (and associated lifestyle) that flowed in from the West, and Riga’s attempt to embed itself in Western Europe by becoming just like a Western city. Though today all three narratives have been discredited, their presence remains.

This situation is further blurred by current economic, political and social conditions. At the national level the government and its institutional allies promote policies which reinforce national agendas, evoking sentiments for a shared cultural landscape grounded in inherited traditions and myths of a pre-industrial, pre-urban society. Yet simultaneously the politicians in power in Riga (and who in many respects inform the cultural atmosphere of the city) advocate establishing stronger economic ties to Russia, the same colonisers who Latvians rejected only twenty years ago. Equally informing contemporary culture in Riga are two other groups (each composed of both Latvians and Russians) with tenuous ties to any traditional sense of national identity; one is the nouveau rich with a common currency based in their shared economic and social standing. At a less strategic level are the youth of Riga, who use either Latvian, Russian and English interchangeably, and whose exchanges and activities reflect a hybridity of attitudes, goals and material attributes.

In this context, understandings of culture founded on a definition of a particular people, place and time are of limited use. It is clear that traces drawn along traditional ethnic lines retain some degree of validity; none however can lay claim to any sense of authority for the whole of Riga. The reality is of a sense of multiplicity rather than any particularity.

## Conclusion

The preceding discussion is intended to prompt consideration of the challenges inherent in intercultural interaction, using an examination of the word culture to highlight a few difficulties. This interrogation has raised questions about our understanding of culture, notably in relation to issues of authenticity, people, location and time. It has also exposed concerns about how the identification of culture can in fact be imposed from outside. Ultimately, our considerations of culture need to recognise that it is a far more malleable and permeable construct that we might ordinarily assume. The implications of this for our practice are considerable.

The example of Riga is but one illustration of the ambiguous contexts in which we can find ourselves working; indeed, the situation in Riga is not so challenging, as its manifold nature is more visibly apparent. More typically, discerning distinctions between any of the overlapping definitions of a local culture is a more elusive goal.

Returning then to the first definition of culture raised earlier in this paper, we commonly understand culture as associated with a particular people, in a particular place and at a particular time. By adopting this definition however, do we automatically restrict who, where and when (and what) might be included in our interaction? Indeed, can we be so particular?

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## Notes

- 1 This paper draws upon the author’s presentation at the same conference.
- 2 This composite definition, and the discussion of the word culture which follows, draws upon the following references: the Cambridge Online Dictionary 2009, ‘culture’; the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary 2009, ‘culture’; and The New Oxford Dictionary of English (Pearsall 1998, 447).
- 3 For further reading, see for example: Brown 2009; Mathews 2000; and Robertson 2005.
- 4 For further reading, see for example: Brown 2006; and Powell, 1995.
- 5 Though identified here as Russian for the sake of brevity, in fact what is referred to as Russian also includes ethnic minorities of other states of the former Soviet Union (e.g. Belarusian) who were encouraged to settle in Riga during the Soviet occupation of Latvia.



We take what we like and make it our own; Western students checking out a popular Japanese eatery (Mos Burger, Kobe). Photo: Robert Brown



## 10

# A blueprint for successful self-actuated student projects?

## The European Architecture Students Assembly

Text by Alex Maxwell

The European Architecture Students Assembly is an annual event which was established by students and tutors of Liverpool University in 1981 as a means to bring talented students together to discuss the issues facing both the profession and urban environments.

Every summer since, around 400 of the brightest students from every part of Europe have come together for two intense weeks of workshops, lectures, exhibitions and events in the name of an exchange of ideas, culture and experience.

In the years since EASA was first conceived it has been held in such ambitious and inspirational situations as a train travelling across Scandinavia, a renovated WWII destroyer moored to the banks of the Danube in the centre of Budapest and even, in 1988, behind the Berlin wall in East Berlin.

The organization is a one of its kind in Europe and is fundamentally different to all other student architecture organisations around the world. Primarily EASA is a network of students, by students, for students; there is no central organisation or board, and no standing affiliation with any external establishment. There are over forty countries that cover the whole of the continent's student population, each of these have two National Contacts (NCs), whose role is to promote the network within their country's student population and to be the link between individual students and the other countries in the network.

### Aims

EASA is a practical network for communication, meeting and exchange. Here, architecture students can discuss their ideas, work together and exchange their experiences concerning architecture, education or life in general.

By holding assemblies in different countries we have the chance to discover their cultural, historical, and environmental background. By exploring new dimensions of communication, reflection and presentation we can achieve a new perspective of dealing with the architectural profession.

EASA is a conscientious assembly. It does not prioritise, set agendas, or hold biases that could be perceived as exclusive. EASA represents a holistic agenda of equal rights towards; gender, race, sexuality or perceptive minority. The inclusion and presentation of this ideal ought to be made apparent through the diversity of participants, workshops and lectures. The aim of EASA is for those who participate to have an extraordinary experience.

### Workshops

The main focus of all summer assemblies is the workshops. The only common element is that they relate to the theme of the event in some way. As such there are a huge range of workshops that could, and have, been undertaken at EASA. That said, all workshops broadly speaking, will fall into one of three categories:

- Theoretical: usually requiring little more than a few laptops and bundles of paper.
- Composite: aim to investigate an issue, design, and build some sort of structure all within the two week time frame.
- Large build: pre-designed by the tutors and generally more ambitious in scale. After a school year of theory and drawing some participants want nothing more than to get their hands on some tools and build.

As the workshops vary so do the outputs that they create. Some achieve investigations that are only possible when you bring together such varied experience and outlooks, whilst most create physical structures of all sizes. These structures vary between:

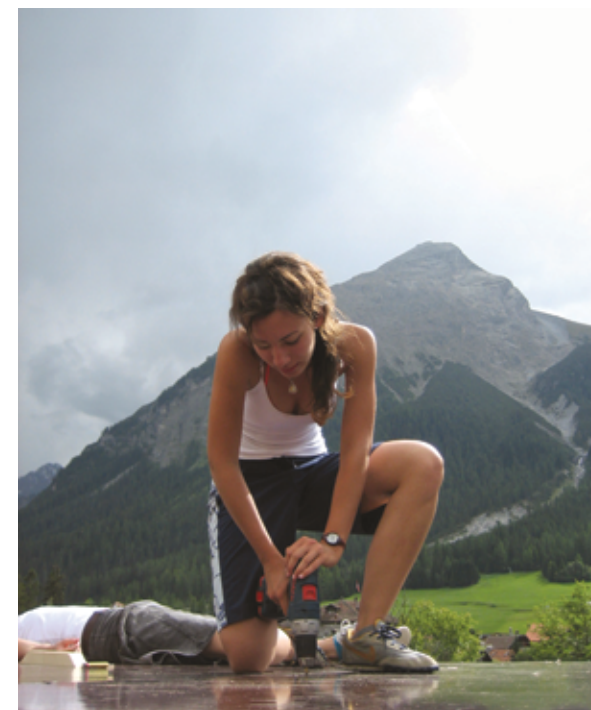


Image left: construction of pavilion, Switzerland, 2005; far left: 'Nomadic Instamatic' workshop on location, Ireland, 2008. Photo: Sandor Lilienberg



- Temporal: only existing during an event or exhibition, as with Nomadic Instamatic in Ireland which used a single building element to create various structures during a walking tour through the national park.
- Temporary: the results of theoretical workshops are so unpredictable that they often create pieces that are of a small to medium scale in the pavilion tradition. These pieces whilst not generally weather hardy can be moved to form parts of exhibitions after the event.
- Permanent: EASA has a fine tradition of making provision for larger scale builds that remain in position long after the event has moved on. Among many examples of these are a bridge built in Switzerland (2005) and a lunch and smoking shelter built at Ireland (2008).

## Spirit – easy to feel, difficult to describe

Key to the success of a summer assembly is the spirit of togetherness that emerges over the two weeks of the event.

A summer assembly is not a holiday and this is particularly reflected in the accommodation provision. The best way to prepare a participant for EASA is to tell them to expect camping conditions. Participants sleep in a shared communal space, generally on scaffolding. Despite the initial surprise of some it is this arrangement that brings people together through a shared experience.

This summer was slightly extraordinary due to an enforced change of plan. The accommodation for easa010 was a late Victorian mill on the banks of the river Irwell. As well as the four storey mill, we rented the adjacent modern warehouse unit. Due to space limitations, a mezzanine deck of scaffolding was installed, however the sleeping conditions could still be described as ‘cosy’. After one week of the event we were served by the fire department with a notice forbidding anyone to sleep in the mill, effective from that evening. Within hours, through the goodwill and support of people in the city we had been working with for up to three years, we managed to secure accommodation and

storage space for all 450 participants at a city leisure centre. Although a logistical and financial burden on the organisers, the participants took the situation far better than we could have expected, and helped in any way they could. It is through these shared trials that a common bond was forged, giving the assembly a changed dynamic, but one in which all participants had a strong belief was the right direction.

## Theme

Each EASA runs to a theme. The theme could be something affecting the host location or it could be something true to the field of architecture as a whole. The theme informs the flavour of the workshops, as well as the lectures and associated events.

The theme for easa010 relates to a situation that is affecting the whole of architecture but its investigation in Manchester is of particular relevance. Identity can be how individuals regard themselves and their place in the world. It can be how an individual is perceived by others. It can also be applied to groups, and therefore to towns and cities. Identity can be how the population of an urban environment regards its place in the world, or how the rest of the world perceives that location from afar.

In recent years, with the increase of speed and quality of transport and communications, towns and cities that were once considered distant have found themselves in direct economic competition, competing for industries, jobs and labour. But beyond tax breaks, how do towns and cities compete for business? One way is to manicure the way it is perceived from the outside, to manage its identity. This route has led to Urban Branding being implemented as part of Urban Planning, and the regeneration of cities to align them with a promise of what to expect from that location. Urban Branding affects all architects in the modern world, from the protectionism of established brands – Paris, to the generation of a Tuscan hill town in Yorkshire – Barnsley.



Testing of materials, Greece, 2007. Photo: Jurrien van Duijkeren



Accommodation, Greece, 2007. Photo: Paolo Masa



Hope Mill workshops, easaDAY, UK, 2010. Photo: Thomas Bennell

Manchester is a city that has been well known throughout its history for a number of different developments and innovations – the first industrial city, women’s rights, splitting the atom, the computer, Factory Records, post bomb regeneration, the Commonwealth Games – and continuously has shed its old labels and renewed itself, summed up with Peter Saville’s refusal to rebrand the city during the mid noughties.

## History and future

By the end of the 1970s the recession of the time and various political pressures on the recent buildings of the UK’s (predominantly northern) cities, the role and power of the architect as was had started to be called into question. In a highly political time, the Student Architects Council (SAC), then presided over by Brian Anson, had organised the first Winter School, in Glasgow. One of the principal ideas of the Winter School was to find an alternative to the *status quo* and stolid experience of architecture school at that time.

Workshops were run by University lecturers from Hull, Manchester and Liverpool and these were attended by large numbers of students. The success of the first assembly promoted another similar event under the same name the year after. It was during the organisation of this event that the proposal to ‘get over the language barrier’ and to organise something on a European scale was encouraged.

With support from universities, SAC and the RIBA, Geoff Haslam and Richard Murphy organised Liverpool Workshops in the summer of 1981. It was promoted all

over Europe as the first European Architecture Students Assembly. Some 500 students attended the first assembly, participating in thirty workshops that investigated a range of issues during that strained time in Liverpool’s (and the UK’s) history.

Underlying all the work done in preparation for the thirtieth European Architecture Students Assembly in Manchester were the four pillars that won the bid. Although of equal importance, the one most visible to those outside the network was Legacy; easaUK wanted the work before and during the assembly to have a positive impact on the city and the UK and to keep the positive energy created within a rather quiet (comparatively) UK student populace.

In June 2011, the easaUK team, backed by the Standing Conference of Heads of Schools of Architecture (SCHOSA), hosted a conference for UK students of architecture at the Manchester School of Architecture. The conference was a chance to return the energy generated by easa010 back to the country that not only spawned it, but that also had the great, but lost, tradition of Winter Schools (the last of which in the recognised format occurred in Sheffield in 2000, although other workshops and studios around the country have since adopted the name).

The conference was intended to spread the experience that the team gained over the last two years around institutions unable to take part in the European event, with the aim of creating a similar UK based event. Talks and workshops covering team building, fund raising, promotion and the media and legal considerations drew from experiences gained working towards easa010, running smaller workshops and the easaHQ gallery.



To help with the integration with the city in the time leading up to the assembly, we decided to run a gallery in the city centre premises loaned to us. We gave free gallery space to local community groups, students of arts and media, and new and up-and-coming artists. In all fifteen exhibitions and events took place before the assembly, and there are events planned to use this space again in the autumn and winter.

We felt that the time was right for the city and the architecture student body to do something that perhaps veered from the perceived norm. Sometimes people just need a spark or someone to tell them that they should follow these ideas. In the short time since the conference, one of the attendees has founded the Scottish Architecture Students Assembly, which aims to establish an annual festival of architecture and design between the five schools in Scotland. There is also talk of taking the conference forward into something more formal at Sheffield this winter. The need for more opportunities for students to get involved in something and actually start something themselves, more importantly, is definitely there in the Universities. If more students take up these projects, then perhaps their voices will be heard by those that can lend the support they need.

The ongoing recession in the UK, the testing times for the architectural profession, and the lack of jobs available for students and graduates is strengthening the perception that there is a need for these bottom-up, often community-driven projects that have direct interaction between 'Architects' and the general public and offer real alternatives to top-down initiatives that often get lost in bureaucracy and have little or no effect.

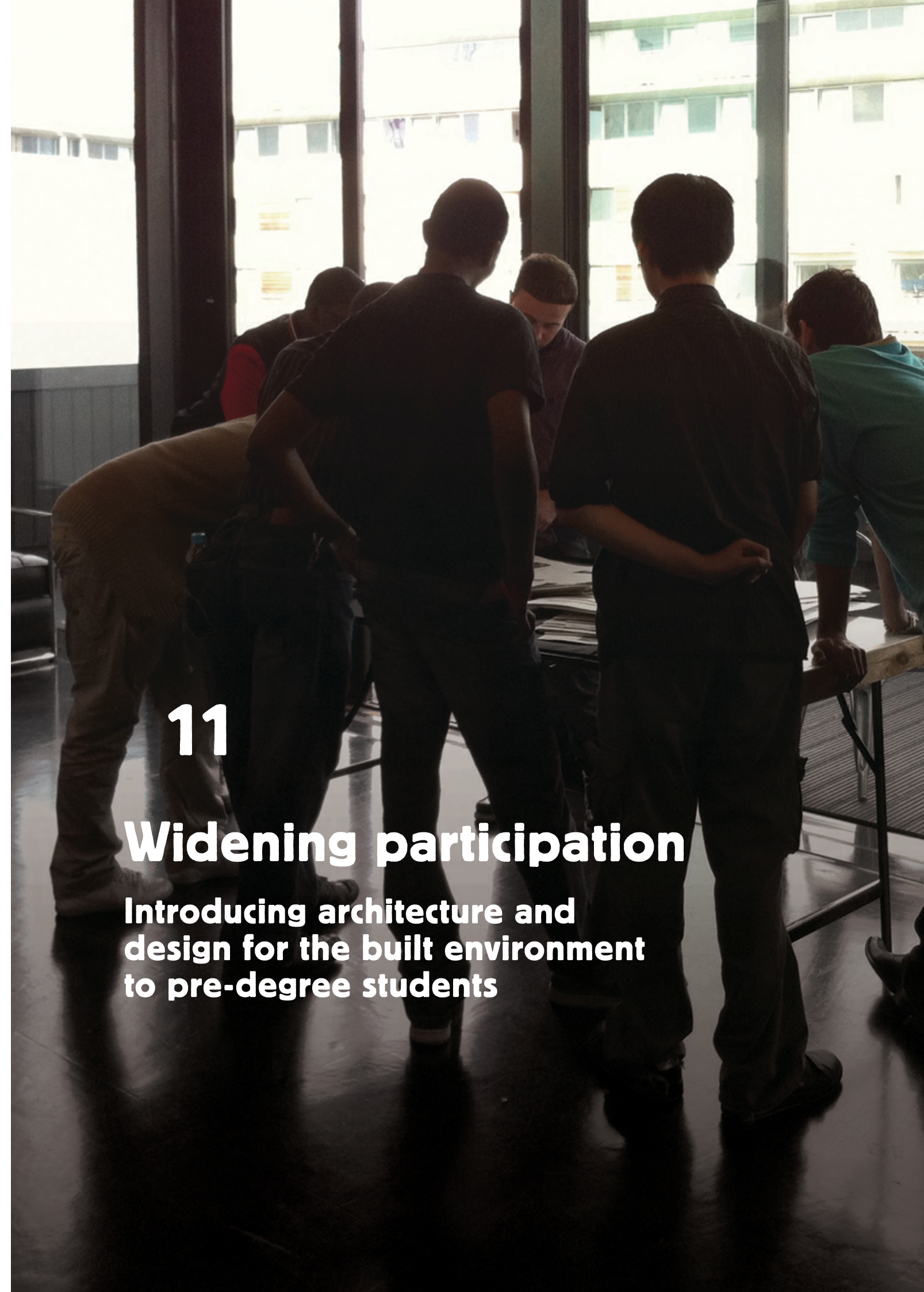
Participating in an EASA will not make you a better architect. It will not add any more weight to a CV or resume (unless you come across an old EASA participant). It does not promise anything other than to

be what it is. Primarily it is a network of, now, thousands of young people from Europe and beyond who want more than the standard education. The interaction at each assembly provides an extraordinary experience. There are very few events like this in the world, fewer in architecture, who can boast such a free exchange of ideas and work over such a number and variety of cultures.

\* The article was written by Alexander Maxwell and does not necessarily represent the views or standpoint of easaUK2010 or EASA.



Participants, UK, 2010. Photo: Bojana Boranieva



# 11

## Widening participation

**Introducing architecture and design for the built environment to pre-degree students**



# Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design

Text by Amritt Flora, Andrew Sides & Alastair Steele

## Abstract

This work presents two approaches to engaging young people, from backgrounds without previous higher education experience, with the idea of study in the field of design for the built environment.

Design Matters seeks to introduce students between the ages of fifteen and nineteen years old to fundamental principles regarding design for the built environment; and through practical hands-on workshops to show young people how they can engage with the subject.

The National Arts and Learning Network (NALN) Summer School and Autumn Workshops assist students who are already undertaking further education courses to develop their understanding of architecture and design for the built environment and provide expert support in portfolio preparation.

Both schemes aim to introduce the subject and the educational experience in a very practical manner, thereby better enabling students to understand their choices and expectations. By gaining an active and dynamic experience of study at higher education level, students gain confidence in their ability to make informed decisions about their future study, additionally recognising that they can obtain the support necessary to succeed at university.

## Key words

‘Widening participation’  
‘Student choices’

## Key points of good practice

- Provide an opportunity for students from diverse backgrounds to engage with design for the built environment
- Enable students to discover their innate design abilities
- Introduce the less formal teaching environment in higher education
- Develop relationships with students who may need additional support prior to them embarking on study at university
- Help students to understand how much they can achieve and what level of self-motivation and self-directed study is required to progress

## Description of implementation

### Design Matters

Design Matters had its genesis in the desire of the North Fulham NDC (New Deal for Communities) to involve the local community in planning the future of a local park. In working with the residents the aim of the NDC was to move beyond a relationship based merely on consultation, to one where the community was empowered and worked in partnership with the regeneration body. It was felt that a key aspect of this new empowerment would be the development of residents’ awareness of design, to increase their ‘design literacy’.

Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design devised a programme of activities that was conceived to draw out participants’ innate appreciation of design, this scheme being titled Design Matters. Methods that

were already established as part of the higher education art and design curriculum were taken and their use extended to both young people and adults outside the formal educational context.

After the success of the initial park project the programme has now become a vehicle for young people to engage with design for the built environment, which is now not only drawn from Fulham, but also from a number of other London boroughs.

The Design Matters programme allows young people, seeking to begin their acquaintance with the subject, to select a personal level of engagement from a year-long series of ‘stepping stone’ events. Individuals choose to join the project at one or more of these introductory ‘taster’ stages, and opt into further sessions, depending upon their personal interest and educational aspirations.

Short one day or half day sessions demanding little time commitment from young people have been conceived to whet the appetite by opening doors into the world of design and the built environment. Visits to the Design Museum ‘Designs of the Year’ exhibition and the RCA Summer Shows in the company of design tutors have permitted the participants to not only engage with design at the initial ideas stage, but also to obtain answers to questions they might have about what they encounter. Other day-long visits, to the Olympic Park in Stratford for example, have allowed young people to see the interaction of the designer’s, architect’s or planner’s vision and the constructed reality.

The structure of longer, multi-day workshops permits students to go through the design process from research through analysis and into proposition. Each stage of work is related to practices found in industry. These week-long Summer Schools have been run in Fulham, and at the Stephen Lawrence Centre in Lewisham.

A ‘Dragon’s Den’ presentation session is the culmination of these longer programmes. The format has the advantage of being well known – we have rarely worked with anyone unfamiliar with it – and contextual in that it resembles both the ‘crit’ and a client meeting. The panel for this event usually consists of some of the practitioners encountered during the week, sometimes joined by new faces. The presence of familiar people, whose work the students have previously seen, further contextualises their own output and beds discussion within a common framework established in previous conversations.

### NALN Summer school and autumn workshops

The widening participation team at Central Saint Martins have developed a relationship with various further education colleges around London and run workshops in fine art, textiles, graphics and architecture. Students studying BTEC diplomas in art and design are invited to attend these workshops, commencing with a week-long summer school during July. Each workshop is developed and run by a tutor/lecturer who teaches on the relevant degree course, with the support of one or two student ambassadors. The ambassadors are typically students who have just completed stage 1 and will



Students on a Design Matters Summer School visit the Olympic Park in Stratford

then also assist in the autumn workshop during their stage 2 studies.

The workshops are designed to open up the students’ understanding of the chosen subject, which is at this point often relatively vague and anecdotal. The architecture summer school typically has about twenty five students from various colleges. The scope of architecture and the built environment is introduced through a number of discussions, exercises and city walks. The week culminates in two days that are spent designing, developing and constructing a spatial project in groups of three or four students. The brief for this asks students to create a space for a conversation between two people utilising a finite amount of card or foam board. The outcomes are then reviewed and exhibited in public to test their performance.

The aim of the summer course is to introduce practical and conceptual ways in which students can engage with the built environment around them. The autumn workshops then follow this up by encouraging students to develop and document various aspects of their portfolio work in preparation for progression to interviews and places on degree courses.

Students attend the autumn workshops on Wednesday afternoons for about fourteen weeks. Completing this course guarantees a student an interview at Central Saint Martins. The focus of these workshops is on producing a portfolio that will have appropriate content to secure a place. In most cases, by the nature of the art and design course they attend, what is lacking is understanding or evidence of process and design development. These weaknesses are addressed through a number of small week-long exercises that build up portfolio content, together with a longer design project that will allow the student to show their process.

Opening image: a ‘student ambassador’ shows participants on the Design Matters course his first year architecture portfolio; left: Design Matters students from inner London visit Pier Head as part of a day trip to Liverpool





Benefits for students

- Low learning threshold: the creative design techniques used in workshops and studio activities are designed to engage young people who may have little or no confidence in their art and design ability
- Embedded in local community: students are acknowledged as local experts, with intersecting and complementary knowledge that is valued and refined through critical discussion and visual expression
- Connection to practice: each stage of work is related to practices found in industry; one of the consequences of this approach is that the young people are able to address real problems and source real solutions; it also makes manifest the collaborative nature of working at the centre of an interdisciplinary team
- Developing skills to articulate progression opportunities at an appropriate level
- Learning to manage timescale and actions necessary to access progression opportunities
- Acquiring skills in organizing themselves and their work to meet deadlines and targets
- Assembling and effectively presenting themselves and their work to an appropriate audience
- Using communication skills effectively

Benefits for teaching staff

- Introducing their field of practice to a new and enthusiastic audience
- Engaging with participants who have few preconceptions about design for the built environment
- Reconnecting academic practice with industry practice

Issues and challenges for students

- Negotiating the process of learning using methods that may be very unfamiliar and disconcerting to them
- Managing the additional workload and demands of a higher-level educational environment
- Understanding the level of commitment that is required
- Moving from an education system where tutors explain what is required to a context where students make many of their own decisions

Issues and challenges for teaching staff

- Balancing the desire, and need, to widen participation in higher education with rising entry standards
- Motivating students to fully participate in a voluntary and free course, where attendance can often be patchy and exercises are often not undertaken
- Inspiring students, who may not be successful in their application for entry to degree-level courses, to profit from the programme
- Pitching teaching at a pre-degree level and not at stage 1 level
- Recognising the uncertainty and confusion that students display when trying to make decisions

- about their future and how this is often influenced by many cultural and familial contexts
- Accepting the limitations of interviews in assessing students’ ability to perform on a course when compared to experience of them in a workshop environment
- Establishing connections with local communities is time-consuming and very difficult
- Obtaining long term funding is usually not possible, thus making everything very short term in outlook

Enablers that helped the project to work

Apart from the support of the Widening Participation team, the assistance of the Architecture Course Director in giving mock interviews and feedback to participants is invaluable. Student ambassadors play a vital role in demonstrating the level at which stage 1 students operate. They will often present their stage 1 portfolio to demonstrate that the levels they are reaching are achieved through continuous improvement. The selection of the ambassadors is therefore important in generating rapport with the younger students and providing a bridge to the university experience from someone other than a tutor.

Project evaluation

Design Matters has continuously recorded and analysed feedback from participants and partners. This has produced evidence showing that Design Matters activities put young people firmly in control within the context of subjects and environments that were, in the most part, completely new to them. By exposing students to higher education staff and related methods of teaching and learning, visits, workshops, summer schools and half-term sessions promoted self-directed and peer-to-peer learning, bonded diverse groups and built confidence in communicating ideas to groups and external professionals.

In Fulham, from the forty-five students who have participated in the programme, fourteen have indicated that taking part in Design Matters has helped them to understand that they would seriously like to pursue study of either architecture or a related field of design. Students reported that a significant benefit they experienced from undertaking the program was the privilege of being able to develop ideas to improve their local neighbourhood.

Significant numbers of students on the NALN Summer School and Autumn Workshops have gained places on architecture degree courses. Some of these have returned as student ambassadors to share their experiences with the next generation.

Improvements and enhancements

Greater emphasis needs to be placed on giving students an accurate impression of the challenge involved in gaining a place on a degree-level course.



Students review their sketch models during the Design Matters Summer School at the Stephen Lawrence Centre, July 2010

It has proven desirable to brief alternate staff for BA course entry interviews, rather than involve those running the workshops. This allows for a more objective view of students’ portfolios, as well as avoiding potential conflicts of interest.

A piece of action research is planned that will ask students to map their own route onto their desired course and the various elements they believe are required to achieve their goals. This data will be used to diagnose gaps and discrepancies between student expectations and reality. It is hoped that this will enable students to focus more precisely on the commitment required and encourage them to engage at a higher level.

Further research is needed to record the destinations of students once they leave the courses.

Advice

Finding the right kind of students is as important for these types of projects as it is for degree-level courses. Attracting students who would perhaps never have considered pursuing studies in the field of architecture and the built environment is vital to widen participation

in higher education. Locating these students is not a job that the staff responsible for delivering the programmes can do. A good working relationship with community-based educational partners who share the same goals, and can identify and involve participants, is therefore vital.

Believing in the need to widen participation in higher education and in the practice of design for the built environment generally is a key quality needed in any staff involved in running such courses. The commitment required (long hours often out of term time, working with students who do not have the maturity of degree-level students) means that teaching staff need to be exceptionally well motivated.

We believe that both Design Matters and the NALN Summer School and Autumn Workshops have developed successful methodologies that open up the world of architecture and the built environment to young people from backgrounds where this was previously unobtainable. Using teaching methods from higher-level courses, that unlock the participants innate design sensibility, alongside opportunities to engage with industry professionals, students have their confidence to engage with design for the built environment transformed.



## 12

# Does architectural education have a problem with diversity and equality?

## Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design

Text by Geoffrey Makstutis

### Equality and diversity in architectural education

Architecture, as a profession, and architectural education have long been seen as an elitist, white, male-dominated profession. In the profession, we have only to try to list the names of well-known female architects or architects of ethnic background to realise that there remains a clear gap between the white, middle-class, male as architect and others.

In the UK, about 38% of graduates from architecture schools are women. Given that more than 50% of the population of the UK are women, this alone raises questions. However, when we see that only 12% of the qualified architects in the UK are women there is an ever more important question.

Why are so few women making the shift from education to profession? This was the question asked by an RIBA funded study in 2003. (Graft-Johnson, Manley & Greed 2003) Seven years later and there has been little change.

Considering BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) participation in the profession and education gives further cause for careful consideration. Approximately

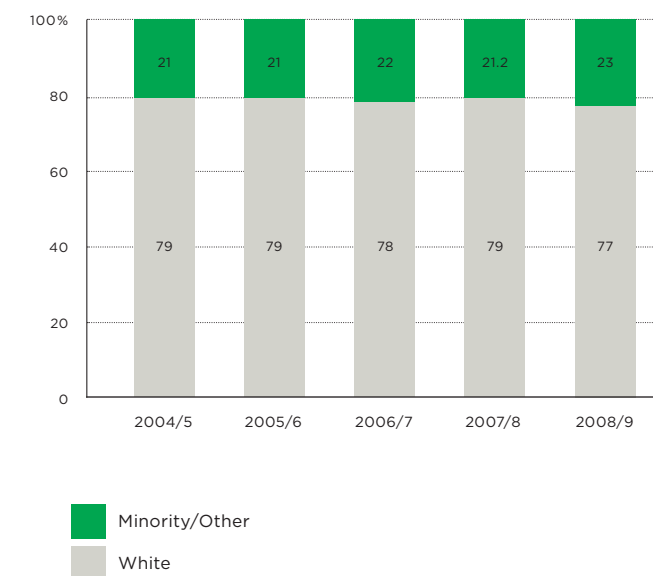
18% of the students studying architecture in the UK are classed as BME. This, in itself, is actually a relatively healthy percentage, when we consider that (according 2001 census data) less than 10% of the UK population are considered within the BME classification. The 18% BME participation in architectural education has remained relatively static since 2004.

Within the profession, however, we find a very different representation for non-whites. According to CABE, about 2% of qualified architects in the UK are non-white. Clearly there is a problem somewhere along the way from education to profession.

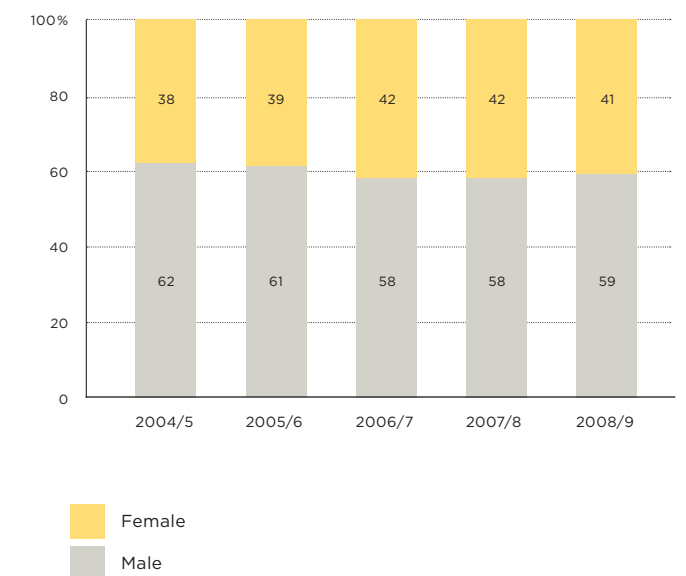
What statistics suggest is that at each transition point (from Part 1 to Part 2, Part 2 to Part 3) the percentage of women and BME participants in architecture drops. What we are then left with is a continuation of the state of architecture as a white male-dominated profession. What is to be done?

Many of the UK architecture schools have worked hard to develop strategies for the inclusion of women and ethnic minorities. The government drive toward greater participation in higher education notwithstanding, architecture schools have been working to be inclusive through a variety of methods.

Ethnicity - Entry to Part 1



Gender - Entry to Part 1





The strategies employed by architecture schools are as varied as the schools themselves. For many, the aim is to broaden access by offering opportunities to primary and secondary pupils to explore and discover design for the built environment. The work of ‘Design Matters’ at Central Saint Martins, in collaboration with the Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust, is one of many programmes across the UK which has developed novel strategies to open up architecture and design to a new group of potential university students.

What is clear is that simply ‘opening the doors’ is not enough. Widening access, without accepting that students from different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds have different needs and expectations, is most likely to offer students greater opportunity for difficulties. BME students are more likely to have non-traditional (e.g. BTEC, HND, NND, etc. as opposed to A-Level) qualifications on entry to undergraduate study. They are also likely to be older, be in employment (in order to fund their studies) and are more likely to enter part-time study. BME entrants to architecture courses are also more likely to leave before completing.

The challenge to architecture schools is to develop a curriculum which both recognises differences and supports students to achieve, regardless of their prior experience. This is no easy task. Given that the student intake may be spread across a very broad range of class, ethnicity and educational experience, the curriculum will need to allow different approaches and, potentially, different outcomes.

Many of the case studies presented in ‘Intercultural interactions’ can be seen in the context of equality and

diversity. There is a clear connection to the ‘outreach’ and ‘inreach’ activities that some schools have developed. Less obvious, perhaps, are those that situate projects in other countries and cultures. We should keep in mind that equality and diversity can also be encouraged by allowing all students to consider the role of architecture in different cultures; recognising their own position in relation to difference.

There are also examples here which offer different approaches to curricula which may assist in moving the educational experience away from the abstract and academic, to more physical and making-based activities. For students from more vocational educational backgrounds, a design pedagogy based on making and building may offer more opportunities to a wider range of students.

The pressures on higher education in the current economic climate pose a considerable threat to the continued diversity of architectural education. The potential of increasing the student contribution to fees (or a ‘graduate tax’) risks putting the cost of education out of the reach of many. Combined this with the fact that the additional costs (materials, printing, etc.) associated with architectural education are an added financial burden. This would put architectural education back in the position of providing an elitist education for only those who can afford it.

The projects and case studies in ‘Intercultural interactions’ represent a broad sweep of approaches to diversity within architectural education. They also represent only a beginning. The work of UK schools of architecture to broaden access and open the curriculum

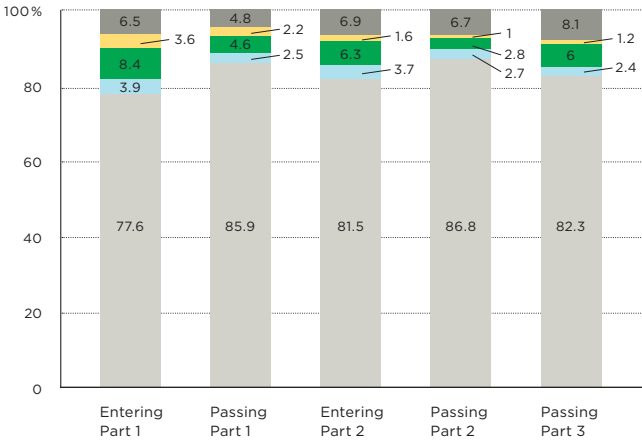
has still further to go. Facing these challenges, as well as the financial pressures of recession, means that the work will become more difficult. In order that the profession becomes one which is truly representative of the UK’s own diversity, however, requires that schools of architecture, supported by the professional bodies and industry, continue to explore and reflect on difference, openness and equality.

Reference

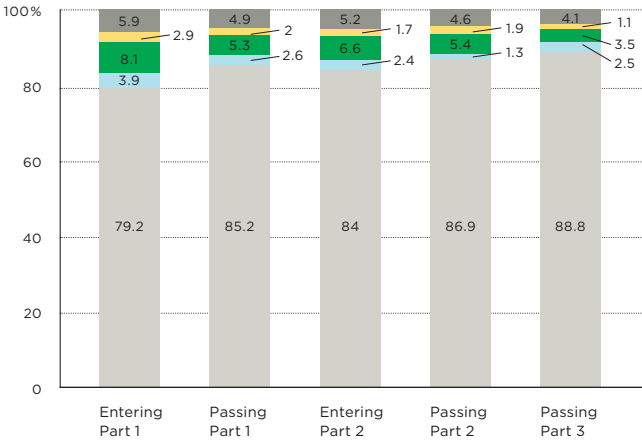
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Results for ethnic groups at Levels

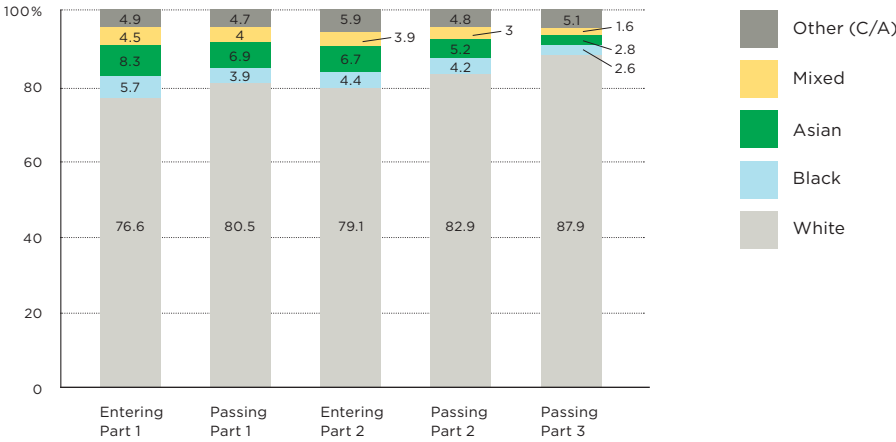
2006/7



2007/8



2008/9





## School of Architecture, University of Sheffield

Text by Prue Chiles

*We find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. (Bhabha, 1994)*

### Context

At university we have the opportunity, the time and the privilege to re-think cultural boundaries; this is never more timely than today with the globalisation of architectural education and the movement of students.

*... what is theoretically innovative and politically crucial is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences (Bhabha, 1994)*

Where do we locate the culture of an inter-cultural university education? We are not talking of a culture that has been colonised by us or of a post-colonial migration, a political diaspora; these students are coming for a shared intellectual experience. At Sheffield, one cultural group in particular, our Chinese students, have required us to review our teaching practices with inter-cultural and international eyes; the sheer number of students from this group wanting to come here (at this moment) has forced this requirement.

We need to apply ourselves to both how we understand different cultures within the architectural tradition, and to how this applies to an architectural education. It also concerns living in a different place. Anyone who has been a 'foreign student' themselves will understand the occasional feeling of alienation and aloneness. Anecdotal evidence from Sheffield's external relations department suggests that a number of the Chinese students feel they may as well have stayed in China, as they go around with other Chinese students and live in a bubble away from their own country.

*There is a strong desire to take an active part in university life, but also a natural tendency to seek out other Chinese students, particularly those who have a better understanding both of students' previous experiences and of the challenges now facing them. In many cases, Chinese students seek to live alongside their compatriots. Cultural practices accentuate the differences; cooking and sharing meals, important leisure activities for Chinese, sometimes place them at odds with home students. (Edwards & Ran, 2006)*

Image left: a workshop with Chinese and British students from different departments making models to explore the spatial needs of group-working

The University's most immediate issue in Sheffield (as elsewhere in higher education) concerns the economic advantages for the University. They are bold in their pursuit of '...our share of the China market'. The more interesting issues are of course the political, the cultural and the learning aspects. But it was largely pressure to increase 'the market share' that led the University to declare, in its mission statement, that internationalisation is on the list of the most important teaching and learning objectives for staff members. These include looking at our teaching methods and considering how we can address far and middle Eastern cultures in particular.

At the School of Architecture there has been an exponential growth in Chinese entry for all parts of our course, particularly our taught masters in Architectural Design, a non-professionally accredited course. One sixth of our student cohort are Chinese and we have two Chinese full-time members of staff out of twenty-five. Most Chinese students are very bright, highly qualified and come from top universities. However, many struggle to understand our ways of teaching and our cultural methods.

This paper explores some of the issues we have experienced and describes some tactics and techniques we are developing that have changed our practice. The paper then changes tack to speculate on a visionary future where the whole city, as well as the university, could develop to better accommodate and learn from our 'foreign students', and to improve their cultural experiences here.

### Meeting the needs of Chinese students

Viv Edwards and An Ran, in *Meeting the needs of Chinese students in British Higher Education* (2006), have cited some of the main issues identified affecting the academic performance of Chinese students. These were clearly related to cultural differences which can be explained in terms of the Confucian ideology. Many students are hampered by the limited understanding of British academics of the cultural expectations of Chinese students.

The fact that the Confucian view of the relationship between students and teachers is very different from the view of Western university teachers gives rise to misunderstandings on both sides. The perception of these students that lecturers are too busy and uncaring is widespread in the UK. The authors also noted that university teachers tend to perceive attempts on the part of Chinese students to engage their attention outside the classroom and office hours as demanding.

13

## Architecture, internationalisation and inter-cultural expectation



Critical thinking and plagiarism

In our first year lectures, we teach about Western culture with respect to the history of architecture and ideas. This does not receive good feedback from Chinese students. They feel it is not relevant to them, not quantified and so it leaves them confused. The lectures are broadly based and discuss connections between buildings and the culture – religious, social or political of the time. They feel the bibliographies are far too long; consequently when asked to write an essay on a building of their choice they do not seek out the references given but often use largely web-based material. This may be because they are far from the libraries that they are encouraged to go to, or that see the task as poorly. The study at the University of Reading bears this out:

*Skills considered important in a British context include the ability to read critically, to form arguments and to structure essays and reports. While report and essay writing appear to cause fewer problems, critical analysis and problem solving are often identified as areas of weakness.* (Edwards&Ran, 2006)

Last year we had a case of plagiarism by a student on this course, where most of the assessed essay was copied wholesale from Wikipedia – a reference source banned at Sheffield through its lack of peer review. In Western higher education, plagiarism is perceived by some as cheating, a violation of the author’s work, and it is thereby considered to be ‘morally’ wrong.

*This worldview stands in contrast with the post-modern view that texts involve a re-cycling of words and ideas rather than the production of something wholly original. While there was uncertainty as to the best way of dealing with this issue, there was an awareness of the developmental nature of plagiarism in international students and the need for a sympathetic understanding of the causes which gives rise to it. Some Chinese students have the need to show respect for an author by using his work in some way, and they take that a stage further and are reluctant to disagree with what they see in print, so they just lift it.* (Edwards&Ran, 2006)

We now are particularly careful to explain the nature of plagiarism, to give clear examples and conduct seminars on essay writing and on-line guidelines. With open source material and the universal use of digital material, not to mention the importance of Wikipedia – we need to carry on thinking about the boundaries of plagiarism and essay writing.

Group work

There was an awareness that group work is a new experience for Chinese students. There was also unease about assembling groups comprising all or mainly Chinese students, particularly when this gave rise to the dominant use of Chinese in discussions. The general consensus, however, was that the ‘engineering’ of groups

was unproductive and that, in some situations at least, the use of Chinese could be helpful in developing students’ understanding of basic concepts. Before they arrive foreign students are asked to keep a sketch journal and to describe where they are from and who they are – when discussed in the wider group this gives these students a higher profile and other students in the group become more engaged and familiar.

In second year for a particular project they are asked again to keep a note-book and to write in Chinese, and then in English – firstly just words – for example, concrete, glass – then a full narrative, the story of the project. We are constantly asking students to seek help and not to carry on struggling with their language, if they are having problems, and we now have professional language help within the department, so they can access this help easily and it can be tailored to their needs. This is proving much more popular than the University’s centralised language help.

UK students also accept and value working with, or alongside, international students. However, there remain issues of integration, fairness, and political agency. There are always comments on feedback sheets on how the numbers are critical and how they feel. They have to work harder, and to explain unfamiliar concepts to their Chinese colleagues; which is fine until they feel short of time and under pressure.

Masters students and live projects

At Masters level many international students still find group work and self-directed learning a struggle. The one year masters students in Architectural Design join in with the six week live projects and major studio projects in the mainstream MArch programme. Each live project group now has two to three students from China. The Chinese students begin hesitantly, but by the end of the exercise they are some of the most powerful advocates for both the live projects and for being involved outside the school of architecture and to engage with clients, users and the general public. Their shyness at talking to clients is contained as they are a member of a group, a team. They get to know other students in the group more easily as they need to work together to make the student led project work well. Comments such as ‘this was one of the best experiences I have ever had’ are really rewarding, as are comments that they want to take the participatory, pro-active processes in our School of Architecture back to China.

Agency and space

*Knowledge, power, space/place closely intertwine to frame our social practices.* (Wilson&Cervero, 2003)

Virtually all teaching at Masters level is around a table. Chinese students, if given the chance, often sit behind in a second tier; this spatial act shows how unconfident the students can be. Both research and our experience shows us that Chinese students often feel dis-empowered and

under-confident. How can we change this and what is the role of space within this?

In the first year the Chinese and other international students are carefully placed in the studio. What we find works particularly well is to make sure they are able to cluster together, but to keep it in part of the open studio. It is better if it is not too compartmentalised, as it becomes a ghetto. These students are strongly encouraged to work in the studio; it is a fine balancing act.

Both Lefebvre and Massey talk about the how space in education ceases to be seen as pre-given, a back drop for action ‘*rather it is recognised as itself the outcome of an ongoing contested productive process in which social and material factors and local and global forces operate.*’ (Cox, 2010)

So, maybe by integrating students into the city, not just the university, and by making their experience shared with home students we can develop a reciprocal, equal relationship with our Chinese students. British students need to be exposed to more Chinese culture. When asked, experienced academics almost always say that *the most important way to improve your teaching of international students is to get to know them as people and to get to know something about their life before, their country, their world.* (Carroll, 2002)

University embassies

Two years ago thinking about these issues in the context of the future of our universities we pondered *what if ...* technology is blended with people and places? What if our universities were designed around mobile technologies and global communities of interest were tied together through virtual networks? What if this triumph of the virtual goes hand in hand with a re-evaluation of place and geography? This could take the form of embassies, university ‘embassies’, outposts of universities from China, India, Alaska and other locations. They would be a physical base that students can go to for ‘home’ support. Room sized screens would stream real time images from the university campuses in China and India into our University.

*The tall ivory towers of a regional university (Sheffield) – dreaming spires with ground floor public ‘embassies’ from*

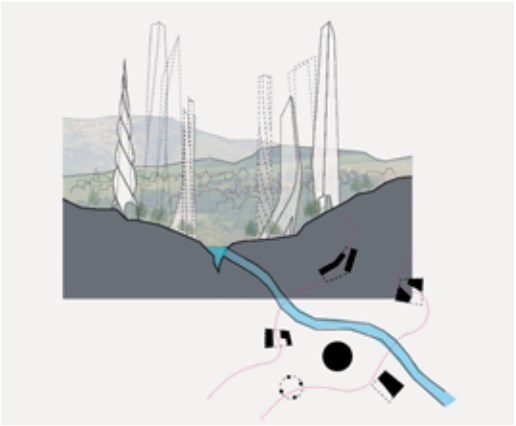
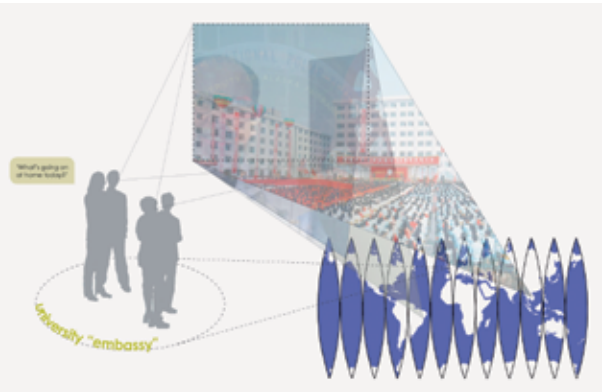


Image: Prue Chiles Claire Kemp



Streaming Images from China/India etc. onto large screens in the university ‘embassies’ – blurring country boundaries. (Chiles&Holder 2009)

*around the world. The further up the tower the more private and ‘studious’ the departments become.*

**A day at work:** *I am meeting a new PhD student today from southern India, who is the first student from her region to study at university. I’m meeting her with the project director and the other team members working on this EU futures project. Her proposal concerns the development of a new building material that picks up traces of the local geological strata and combines this with new silica glass technologies that produce energy. These transformational projects are currently in their prototype stage, and are about to be installed here at Sheffield University, and at six other global locations. Management of the project is complex, with involvement across four different continents, and the input of over fifty PhD students. The project has the firm backing of the University, as the prototype production workshop is sited in the region, and we are receiving a delegation from the World Trade Centre. We have booked the first floor meeting room beause today we need a presence in the city. From here you can see the city bustle below, but it is quiet behind our electro-chromatic glass. Before the opacity changes you can just see the hills. Although I love the huge screen that streams real time images from the campus at Mumbai, I want to be inspired by the local landscape of incised valleys and moors. I believe we now have ten of these ‘embassies’, and I sometimes feel that I am truly in a global melting pot.* (Chiles&Holder 2009)

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## ASD Projects, Faculty of Architecture and Spatial Design, London Metropolitan University

Text by Anne Markey

ASD Projects, a RIBA Chartered Practice embedded within the Faculty of Architecture and Spatial Design at London Metropolitan University (London Met), allows staff and students to carry out live projects, research and consultancy within a supportive professional environment. Conceived of as an enabling vehicle to deliver this support, ASD Projects was established in 2004 as a result of a successful bid to the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF2) for seed funding. To mark its launch, and to share best practice in teaching architecture through live projects, ASD Projects held a conference on International Project Offices in November 2005.

Papers were presented by delegates from Rural Studio, University of Alabama; the Department of Architecture, Interior Design and Lighting at Parsons the New School for Design, New York; the Architectural Projects Unit, Chinese University of Hong Kong; Baupiloten at the Technical University of Berlin; the Design Research Bureau at the University of Sheffield.

All of the delegates shared their experiences of working with students on real design and build projects which ranged from modest community structures carried out on a *pro bono* basis to large scale master planning commissions for the public sector.

Positioned somewhere between the American model of design-build projects and the European professor-led research studio, ASD Projects is now an established unit that generates research and third stream income for the Faculty. It supplies services to external clients within the context of a Faculty of Architecture and Spatial Design that is at the forefront of contemporary developments in design education and practice.

The architects employed by ASD Projects are recognised by their clients and their peer group as talented and innovative architects. Their design skills are supported by London Met architecture students, who have a longstanding record of success in the RIBA President's medals.

To celebrate the achievements of the Faculty, ASD Projects curated an exhibition at London Met in November 2008, 'Research and Live Projects', that displayed the range of completed projects carried out by staff and students over the previous three years.

Anne Markey heads up ASD Projects under the direction of Professor Robert Mull, Dean of the Faculty, with two full time architectural assistants, both London Met graduates, and part-time staff on a project-by-project basis.

### Live projects and consultancy

*To be fully understood, (literary) works must be reinserted into the system of social relations which sustain them. This does not imply a rejection of aesthetic or formal properties, but rather an analysis based on their position in relation to the universe of possibilities of which they are a part.* (Johnson, 1993)

Independent yet embedded in the academic context of one of the UK's leading schools of architecture, the ASD Projects office offers the development, coordination and seamless integration of inter disciplinary academic, design-based and educational projects.

These projects can involve multiple partners ranging from other schools of architecture and university faculties in the UK and abroad, to government agencies, non-governmental organisations, students, school children, artists, educators, and other interested parties.

We particularly encourage and support the development of research or education based architectural live projects, which combine the challenges of working with and for real communities and individuals with the potential of rigorous creative and academic investigation offered by schools of architecture. Such projects bridge and combine skills and knowledge in architectural practice and academic research to create a rich educational experience for students as well as the participating project partners, whilst contributing positively to the built environment.

*'The machinations of the drawing board are not the only things that ought to be addressed. There is life outside of the studio, the building site and the private library, and, of course, architects and everyone involved in architecture (which is, in fact, simply everyone) is absolutely implicated in this wider world of architecture*

# 14

## Enabling, Engaging and Experimenting

### Supporting intercultural interactions

Image left: Playing in the boat, Millfields School. Photo: Chris Howgate;  
right: Inhabiting the classroom, Mumbai, India





– *inescapably, every day, we all live in and through architecture.*’ (Borden & Rendell, 2000)

ASD and the ASD Projects office have extensive experience in the management and evaluation of live projects. The design and construction of real building projects provides students with a unique opportunity to deliver useful structures within tight budgets and time constraints. The students are provided with an opportunity to learn about many areas of project development and procurement, from consultation to constructional tolerance. More importantly, students are also provided with the opportunity to deal with the complex process of working with clients to develop and refine a real and workable brief.

Live projects can provide students with an opportunity to influence development, such as at the masterplanning project at Millfields School, which will enable staff and parents to critically evaluate proposals for an extension of the school to accommodate increased student numbers. ASD Projects empowers students and allows their work to be relevant. (Markey, 2010) These projects serve to remind students that their profession has an honourable tradition of *pro bono* work and are carried out within a faculty that has a commitment to socially engaged design, where students, academics and practising architects come together to enhance the built environment for the benefit of others.

#### Millfields Primary School masterplan

ASD Projects completed the first stage of the Millfields School Play Area Masterplan in Hackney in July 2009. Artist Martin Kaltwasser, commissioned by ASD Projects, constructed a boat-like structure with ASD Projects staff and student volunteers. The structure provides a much needed temporary quiet area and will test how the grounds could be used with the children and play workers. Future work includes a long-term masterplan for the play areas and the design of innovative play landscapes and equipment in collaboration with Torange Khonsari and Sandra Denicke-Polcher and their students from London Met’s Studio 3.



Millfields School workshop, Hackney, London

#### New classroom for Kingsmead Primary School, Hackney

The new classroom is for reception age children and includes an outdoor learning area and a covered waiting area for parents. The project was designed by Anna Page, a London Met student undertaking her year out with ASD Projects. A timber frame structure was designed to resemble a piece of joinery extruded from the existing brickwork which incorporated a secure outdoor learning area and covered parents waiting area all under a living green roof. The contractor was selected for their fast-track building system, which is pre-engineered and assembled on site to innovative architectural designs. ASD Projects were appointed in Spring 2006 and the new classroom was ready in time for the second intake of reception children in January 2007.

### CPD and capacity building

ASD Projects also finds itself playing an increasing role as enablers within the wider society through capacity building programmes, continuing professional development and public engagement. Whilst drawing on the strengths of the department, ASD Projects also benefits from being part of London’s largest unitary University and can draw on world class research and consultancy skills. Our close links to specialists across the university provide access to a comprehensive range of knowledge that reinforces our skills. We have experience of collaborating with other departments in London Metropolitan University in order to utilise their specialist input on our projects on issues such as accessibility, community health, economics and finance, leisure and tourism, lifelong learning and transport.

#### Schools Design CPD Course

ASD Projects, in partnership with the Institute of Education, University of London and the Royal Institute of British Architects, developed a Schools Design CPD Course in 2008 in response to a request from the Department of Children, Schools and Families for



ASD Studio 3 student working with artist Martin Kaltwasser during construction, Millfields School

#### International Architecture Student Festival

ASD Projects has, together with Pippa Gueterbock, committee member of the London Festival of Architecture, co-directed the International Architecture Student Festival for the London Festival of Architecture (formerly the London Architecture Biennale) in 2006, 2008 and 2010. These Student Festivals brought together national and international design students with local communities to create a series of site-specific interventions in key public spaces within the London Festival of Architecture’s focus areas. The outcome was a series of unique projects which signpost the LFA and reflect a sense of place through their intervention. The projects have an opportunity to test long term proposals through these short term interventions. This year long project introduces local young people to architecture, and students to the realities of construction. (Markey & Gueterbock, 2009)

#### RIBA Return to Practice Course

ASD Projects has entered into a partnership with the Royal Institute of British Architects to deliver a short course for architects wishing to return to practice. The RIBA/London Met Returners’ Course is aimed at qualified practitioners who have taken a career break, and responds to the findings of the RIBA/University of the West of England research, on why women in particular leave architecture. The course has evolved, with Economic Challenge Investment Funding, to also support architects who have been made redundant in the recent recession. The four-day programme includes practice visits and site visits, social events and seminars that increase participants’ confidence, guidance on starting a practice, explorations of alternative practices and career options, and provides updates on technology, legislation and social and political contexts.



Classroom extension and parents waiting area, Kingsmead Primary School, London, Photograph by Morley Von Sternberg

Universities to address the issue of schools design skills in the Labour government’s Building Schools for the Future programme.

The course was designed to be multi-disciplinary where architects, contractors, IT and furniture suppliers and local authority representatives could learn about the challenges and chances offered by the school capital investment programmes and school design through lectures, workshops, a site visit and case studies.

A key feature of the Schools Design Course syllabus was the opportunity to learn from history, and our schools course candidates acquired awareness of how cyclical architecture and the politics that shape it can be, an awareness that became increasingly pertinent as the impact of the change in government in 2010 on education and its architecture came into effect.

The programme was well subscribed, with five courses being delivered at London Metropolitan University and RIBA during 2009 and 2010. We are currently in the process of developing the CPD course into a joint multi-disciplinary Masters in Learning Environments with the Institute of Education.

#### Schools Design CPD

ASD Projects were also asked by the DCSF and the RIBA to co-ordinate a national academic and research programme with schools of architecture which was linked to Building Schools for the Future in England. The project also offered local school children an opportunity to be actively involved in design and cultivated links between higher education institutions and local schools.

Symposia were held at the award winning Westminster Academy in the Winter of 2009 and the Libeskind designed Graduate Centre at London Metropolitan University in Spring 2010. Speakers from the Sorrell Foundation, Croydon Council and the DCSF gave presentations of the engagement of schoolchildren, teachers and parents in the participatory design of schools and the students shared their work. An exhibition at the RIBA in September 2010 documented the programme.



Student checking foundations, Mumbai, India





ASD Student Pavilion at British Library, London, 2006  
Photo: David Grandorge

## Research and international live projects

As well as engaging with live projects locally, we work in areas subject to change across the globe. Since its foundation, ASD Projects has enabled staff and students to develop some of these projects initiated through research and teaching in a number of international contexts, including India, Cuba, Iran and the Ukraine.

### Architecture of Rapid Change and Scarce Resources

The research area of the Architecture of Rapid Change and Scarce Resources (ARCSR), as led by London Met (and as described in Toby Pear and Professor Maurice Mitchell in Chapter 6), focuses on an emergent area within the practice of architecture. ASD Projects have been working with ARCSR staff and students since 2007 enabling delivery and development of live projects. Completed and ongoing projects in India include a series of community education spaces for the quarry workers of Navi Mumbai, the first of which was shortlisted for the Architect's Journal Small Projects Award 2010, the micro-planning of a resettlement colony outside Delhi and Kuchhpura Sanitation Upgrading Programme in Agra. More recently Bo Tang and Shamoon Patwari, ARCSR graduates, have been working on the design of a new primary school for the community of Kaningo in Sierra Leone that is currently under construction.

### Training the mayors

In Iran we have been commissioned by the International Art and Architecture Association to develop an ongoing education programme in Architecture and Urbanism. The programme is aimed at mayors and councillors of cities and towns and was delivered in collaboration with the Architecture Research Unit and Torange Khonsari and Sandra Denicke-Polcher of London Met's Studio 3.

### Oral History Archive

With Torange Khonsari and Anna Page (formerly a London Met Studio 3 architecture student) we also



London Met's cross disciplinary team: Solar Decathlon 2012 proposal

joined forces with London Met's International Institute for Culture, Tourism and Development, and the 30 Bird Theatre Company to further develop Anna's Qazvin Heritage architectural prizewinning scheme for an Oral History Archive. Phase 1 comprised researching and developing a play script from the oral stories about their everyday lives which were collected from children in Qazvin.

### Architecture school in Cuba

ASD Projects were commissioned to produce a feasibility study for a new building arising out of negotiations that London Met had entered into with the Cuban Ministry of Higher Education and the Universities of Sancti Spíritus and Santa Clara in Cuba to establish a new school of architecture incorporating a centre for sustainable research for the province of Sancti Spiritus. Rik Nys of London Met's Unit 2 developed proposals, assisted by Unit 2 students, Nick Bristow, Alessandro Milani and Iain Smales, and they were presented by Rik Nys and Anne Markey of ASD Projects at Universidad 2008, an international conference in Havana, Cuba following which the feasibility study was handed over to Fidel Castro in what was to be his last week as *Comandante en Jefe*.

### Project Odessa – Strategies for Transition (POST)

London Met's Signy Svalastoga and Unit 10 have been working in Odessa, Ukraine for three consecutive years. They have developed relationships with Kuyalnik Sanitorium and are working with ASD Projects to deliver a summer workshop in the health resort there. This will be a multi-disciplinary summer workshop based in Kuyalnik, on Odessa's Northern fringe. The research-based programme will involve a series of specialist seminars, workshops and site explorations with invited guests, experts in the fields of architecture, landscape architecture, ecology, engineering, gestalt theory and landscape art. These studies will form the basis of future investigations and live projects within the Kuyalnik region.

### Solar Decathlon 2012

London Met is one of just 20 institutions from around the world and the only UK university chosen to take part in the 2012 Solar Decathlon Europe competition. The Decathlon is a world-wide contest between universities, to design and build a self-sufficient house powered only by solar energy. ([www.sdeurope.org](http://www.sdeurope.org))

For SDE 2012 London Metropolitan University has formed a cross faculty team of students and academics who will work closely with professionals to deliver an innovative design which will be assembled and tested on site in Madrid. London Met's SDE 2012 Team is co-ordinated by ASD Projects and student participants include undergraduate and post graduate students from architecture, sustainability, engineering, computing, design and media. ([www.heliomet.org](http://www.heliomet.org))

### Outdoor community stage in Kronberg, Germany

ASD Projects is supporting a live project in undergraduate Studio 3 led by tutors Sandra Denicke-Polcher and Torange Khonsari for a community stage in Kronberg. The stage that was built is a result of extended consultation of local community organisations. Throughout the academic year undergraduate students went to Germany, and took on various roles; acting as agents for the project, graphic designers, offering tea to designers, and they presented seven different proposals to the local community. The result is a timber structure with copper alloy panels designed by student Craig Harrison-Smith, it was selected by the residents of Kronberg by competition and was completed in May 2011.



Consultation: outdoor community stage in Kronberg

## Conclusion

ASD Projects was developed to reinforce the faculty's commitment to socially engaged design, architectural education and to contemporary interests such as long-term sustainable design and community participation. The founding of ASD Projects has enabled us to engage with the culture we serve, enabling us to be active agents rather than chroniclers of change. We favour projects with a clear social purpose and aspire to effect change through delivery of live projects with our students, engaging the next generation of architects in real life issues and equipping them with the skills to be relevant in this challenging era.

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# Contributors

**Peter Beacock** is Head of Department of Architecture Engineering and Construction at Northumbria University. He has been responsible for the development and validation of the architecture programmes at the University, and promotes an approach to design teaching founded on contextual studies through regional engagement. He is a member of the RIBA Validation Panel, is an adviser to the ARB and is a member of SCHOSA Council. His main research and teaching interests are environmentally conscious design, regional engagement and contextual studies, which includes a recent book on the Architecture of Newcastle and Gateshead.

**James Benedict Brown** is a PhD candidate at QUB. His current research centres around an investigation into the origins, motivations and roles of live projects in architectural education. He has studied, practised and taught in Sheffield, London, Montréal, Glasgow and Belfast.

**Robert Brown** is Head of Architecture at the University of Plymouth. He has over twenty years of professional experience in community-based development in the UK, India and Africa, with research interests in socio-cultural identity and the city.

**Leo Care** is Associate Director of Bureau – Design+Research (BDR) at The University of Sheffield School of Architecture, where he manages a range of consultancy and research projects, specialising in creative engagement strategies and visioning processes. The work of the BDR links to Leo’s teaching role within Degree and MArch courses, developing learning programmes that link Higher Education with communities and architectural practice.

**Prue Chiles** is Director of PhD’s by Design and the Bureau-Design+Research (BDR) at the School of Architecture, University of Sheffield. Both pursue ‘research by design’ and are working to raise the profile of architectural design within the building process and within the research community. This work is supported by a small award winning private practice – Prue Chiles Architects (pruechilesarchitects.co.uk).

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**Robert Mull** is Dean of the Faculties of Architecture and Spatial Design and Art, Media and Design at London Metropolitan University. He chaired SCHOSA from 2008 to 2010, during which period he led the CEBE Special Interest Group on ‘Intercultural interactions’. He has worked both as an architect in private practice, as Principal of Beevor Mull Architects, and as an academic for over twenty years. Robert’s particular interests lie in the social and regeneration potential of participatory architecture and direct intervention. He has been a Professor of Architecture to a number of institutions including the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and the University of Innsbruck.

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**Intercultural interaction**  
**in architectural education**

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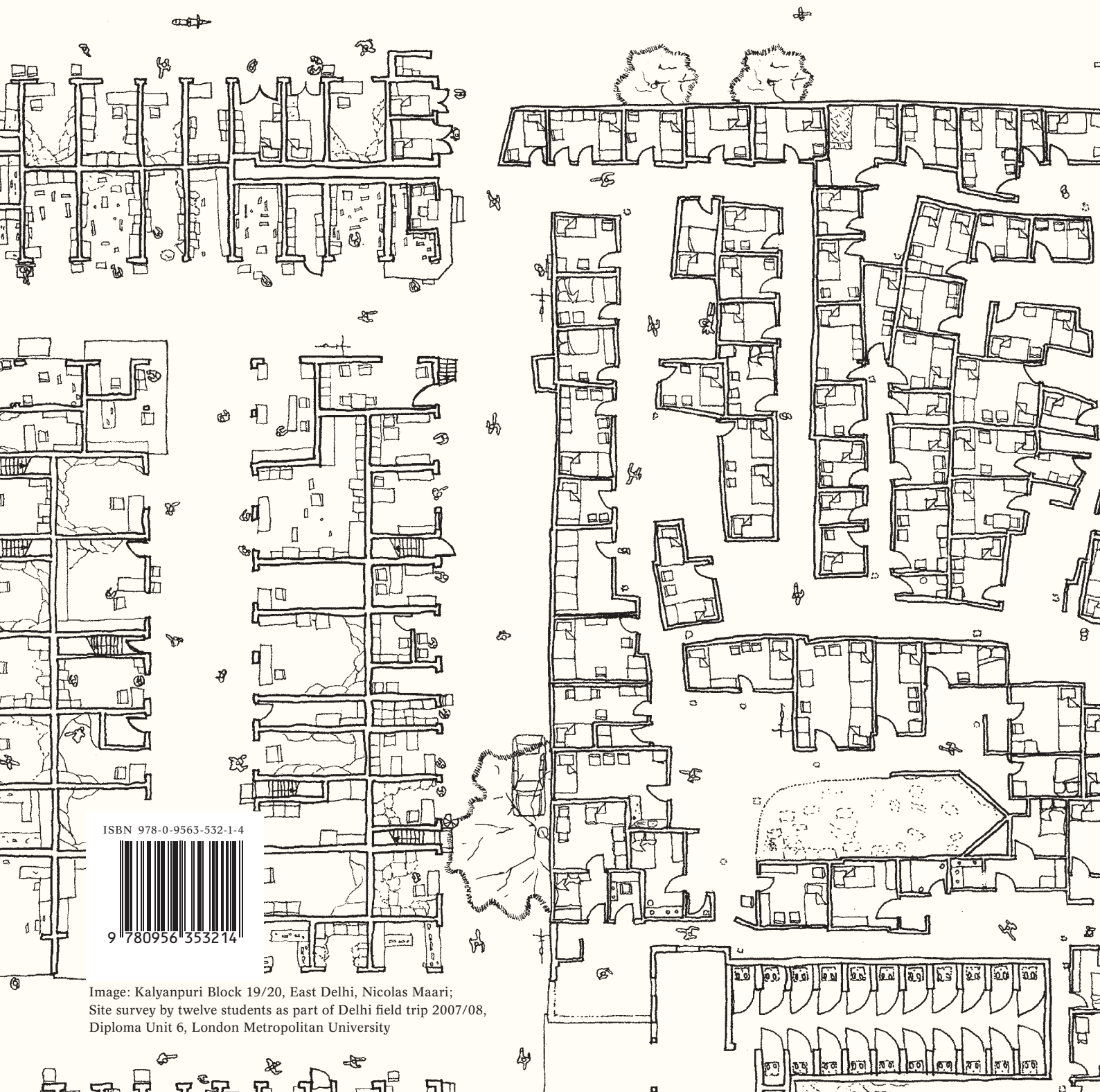


**SCHOSA**  
Standing Conference of  
Heads of Schools of Architecture



'This publication is a guide to the scope and variety of work within a number of architectural institutions that engages with diverse cultures and contexts. This is work that asks students to bridge between their responsibilities as caring citizens and emergent professionals. As such it is an argument for schools of architecture to engage with the society they are a part of and that they serve, and to support students in building upon their personal values to shape their career and the future of architectural practice' Robert Mull, co-editor.

Intercultural Interactions is a theme that began within SCHOSA (The Standing Conference of Head of Schools of Architecture) whilst Robert Mull was chair between 2008 and 2010. The theme and this publication were then developed with the support of CEBE (The Centre for Education in the Built Environment) and the ASD Projects office at London Metropolitan University.



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Image: Kalyanpuri Block 19/20, East Delhi, Nicolas Maari;  
Site survey by twelve students as part of Delhi field trip 2007/08,  
Diploma Unit 6, London Metropolitan University