

## ***SYMPOSIUM: Rethinking Architectural Education – the New EU Directive and the Role of Live Projects (4 papers)***

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### **Symposium Summary**

The symposium will encourage the participants to discuss the teaching method of Live Projects as part of the typical 5 year architectural education in the UK. Within the context of the new EU directive and the potential for a rethinking of the “3+2 years” (+ 2 years in practice) usual architectural education in the UK, Live Projects play an important role, adding practical experience to a shorter “5+0 years” model (without the year in practice). The information and knowledge delivered in the symposium can play a demonstrative and exemplary role in future architectural educational reform.

At the Cass. School of Architecture, several studios at Undergraduate and Diploma level choose to work on Live Projects with their students as the year-long programme. These Live Projects play an important role within the students’ architectural education and increasingly will do so in the future, as Live Projects add practical experience to a potentially reduced architectural education to 5 years without a year out. The studios at the Cass do not only teach students about the professional side of architectural practice (e.g. real clients), but also contribute to research in architecture. Three studios will be presenting their work and methodologies as a base for discussion at the beginning of the Symposium, followed by a short Q+A session, involving the audience and other institutions.

The faculty based RIBA Chartered practice *CASSprojects* supports the live projects at the Cass by providing the professional environment for live projects carried out by students and staff, using the professional structure of the RIBA practice. *CASSprojects* will be presented as a neutral enabler for Live Projects at the Cass. The issue of balance between consultancy commissions and research projects as well as issues of health and safety will be presented.

Followed by a short Q+A session, the four presented papers intend to encourage an in-depth discussion about what professionalism in an academic context can mean. A number of the presented projects, mostly public in nature and often located in deprived areas with non-paying clients, are only possible within the university context where students are offered opportunities to be involved (often as part of their

studies), supported by academics who happen to be professionals as well. As part of the proposed symposium we want to explore how projects are experimental in nature, can equip students with research and communication skills, and contribute to new ways of practising when the young architects leave the university.

The symposium will suggest three themes to be explored jointly by the audience or in groups (according to the size of the participants).

- What makes a project *live*?
- What support is needed for Live Projects?
- What is the role of the architect within the Live Project?

The outcomes of the discussions will be presented to the other groups for conclusion.

**1 - Undergraduate Studio 3: Self-Initiating Community Projects Through Multi-Disciplinary Practice (Sandra Denicke-Polcher and Torange Khonsari)**

<http://www.thecass.com/courses/studios-units/architecture/undergraduate/studio-3-2013-14-brief>

method establishes a non-hierarchical relationship where trust can start to form without the requirement of a direct and efficient outcome. The dialogues establish a series of relationships, which act as the future support network of the social and political architectural/urban project.



Fig. 1. Bringing the Archive out, Liverpool 2010

In a context where public and civic spaces of the city are being privatised and architects are more and more responsible for this action, it is important that we teach future architects to self-initiate socially engaged and politically driven projects. These projects aim to reclaim public and civic spaces of the city for its citizens and enable citizen participation in its management and authorship.

The methodology of engagement happens through intriguing built objects and structures called "conversation kits" which initiate dialogues. This

The second methodology insists on programming regular events. This not only maintains and strengthens the relationships but also expands the network of future empowered citizens. The built enclosure - or conventionally known as *the architecture* - is the final formalisation of a civic program and civic community. This process insists that architecture needs to slow down and rigorously and critically consider what it builds, at the same time judging its social and political implications in the city.

As Hannah Arendt mentions, acting within the city cannot be singular, it has a plurality, which involves local residents, partners and collaborators. This cannot be taught from the safe environment of the academic institution or in front of a computer screen, it needs to be *live* and engaged. Live projects in a social and political context can teach students how to construct a politicised project and architecture practice.

## 2 - The Brazil Programme at the Cass: Living in the City (Sandra Denicke-Polcher and Dann Jessen)

<http://www.thecass.com/projects/projects/current1/brasil-living-in-the-city>

A series of lectures and an exhibition, both at the Cass and in São Paulo, contribute each year to the dissemination of these *live* projects beyond the Cass and the partner school.

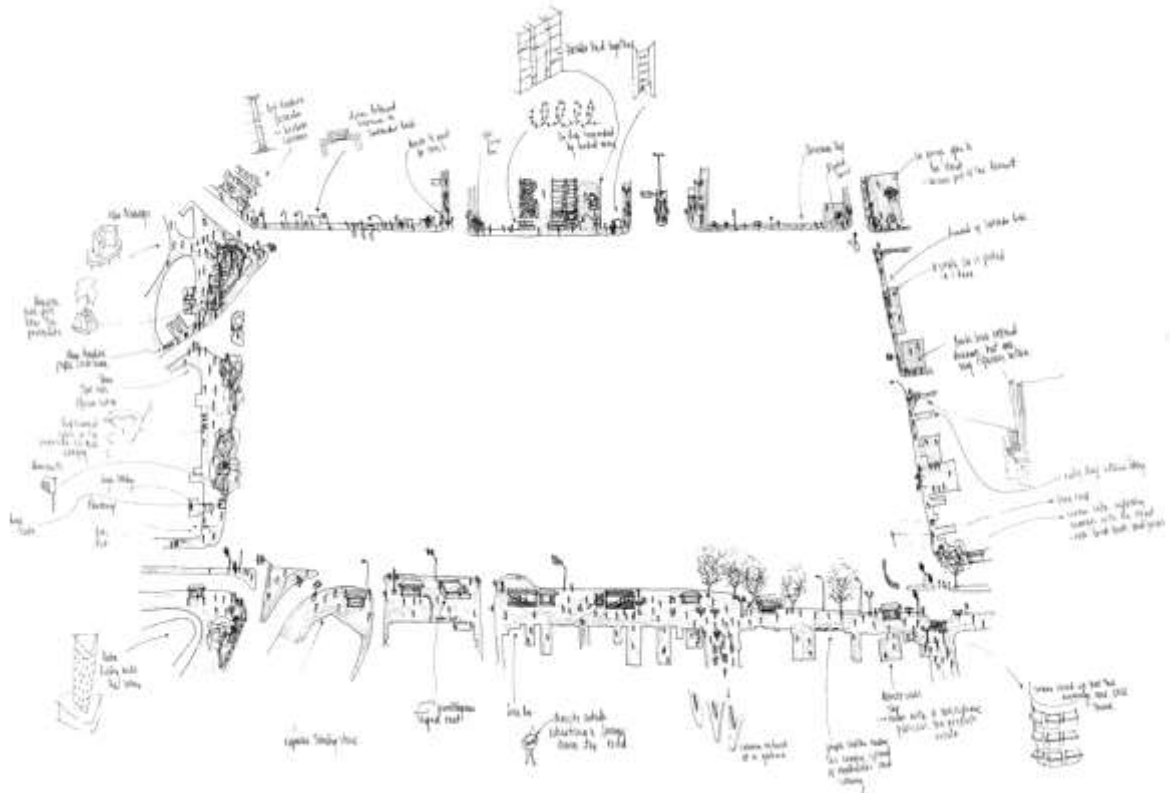


Fig. 2. Mapping Praça República, São Paulo 2013

The programme explores transformative outcomes for a fresh approach to urbanism. Each year a group of students immerses itself for 2 weeks into the city fabric of São Paulo exploring urban situations through observation and testing spatial opportunities of these across all scales.

Working with different cohorts of students (5 year programme = 5 different cohorts) students are contributing to an overall body of work and develop a "common" expertise.

Throughout each academic year, projects are developed from this joint *live* experience and the information jointly gathered is used for propositions.

The programme is researching opportunities for how the city can be carefully designed to strengthen existing qualities and contribute to the public realm with generosity. Collectively, proposals have strong potential for influencing future attitudes towards development within the centre of São Paulo, and the potential role of these districts within the wider city.

### 3 - Architecture of Rapid Change and Scarce Resources: Live Projects as a Tool of Research (Maurice Mitchell and Bo Tang)

<http://www.thecass.com/research1/research/arcsr>

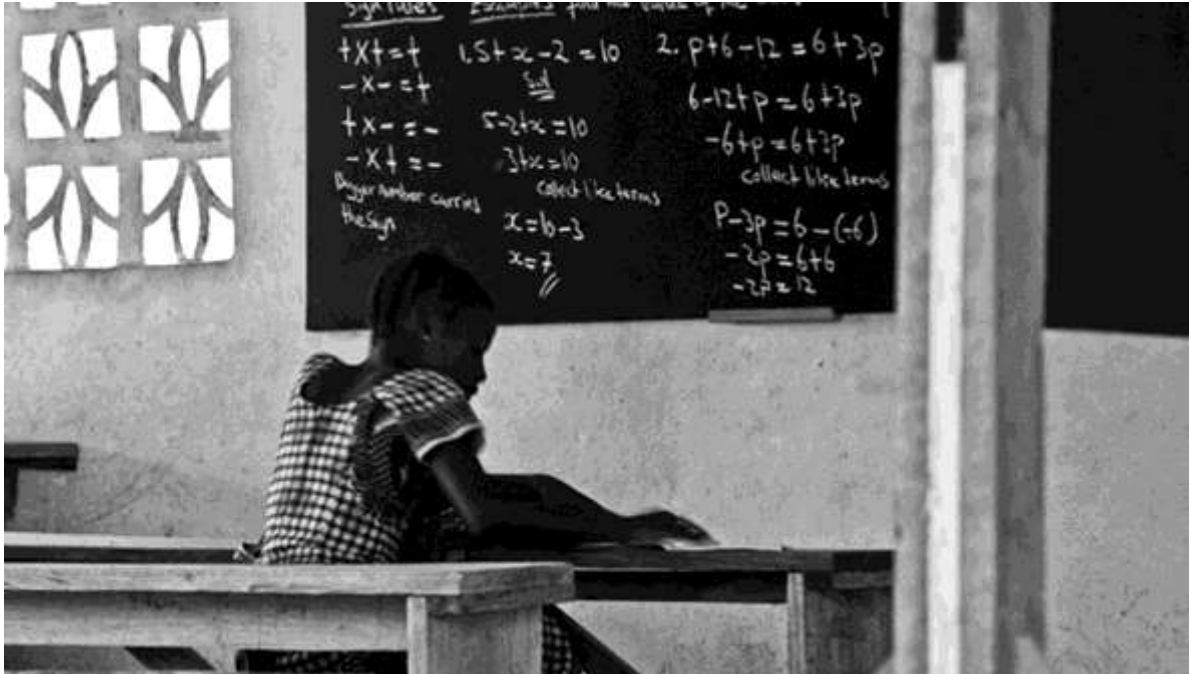


Fig. 3. Classroom Furniture Workshop, Ivor Leigh Memorial School, Freetown, Sierra Leone, 2013

The talk will review how involvement with a live project to build a modest primary school in Freetown Sierra Leone provided a dynamic learning context within which students were able to gain first hand an understanding of the local physical and cultural topography in and around the school site sufficient to both ensure an appropriate fit for proposals and to sustain an educational programme.

Students went on to represent the future potential of the peri-urban place within which the school was situated and in combination with two other survey areas were, after an exhibition of their work at the British Council in Freetown, introduced to two live conversations at city level which have seeded 5th year projects to design both a new school of architecture and a national museum. Both of these projects are ongoing and have the real potential to go live.

### 4 - CASSprojects: Supporting Live Projects by Combining the Discipline of Research and the Discipline of being Professional (Anne Markey)

<http://www.thecass.com/projects/projects>

An interactive workshop is proposed that will address the practicalities involved in setting up projects offices within schools of architecture such as health and safety issues; liability and professional indemnity insurance; co-ordinating the demands of the client with the academic needs of the students; initiation and acquisition of projects.

The workshop will be chaired by Anne Markey Director of CASSprojects, a RIBA Chartered Practice embedded in the Sir John Cass Faculty of Art, Architecture and Design at London Metropolitan University. There will therefore be an opportunity to explore the potential to offer practical training, that meets prescribed criteria, through live projects during the 5 years of academic study instead of through conventional years out in practice.

Time permitting, the workshop can also discuss the framing of live projects as research outputs for staff.



Figs. 4 & 5. New Classroom and Outdoor Play Area, Kingsmead Primary School, Hackney designed by Anna Page during her Year Out with CASSprojects

