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Editorial: Live Projects across the disciplines

Live Projects in the discipline of architecture have been described as a form of ‘proto-practical learning that takes place in the borderlands between architectural education and built environment practice.’ (Harriss & Widder, 2014, p. 1). They often involve varied forms and models including design/build work, realised projects, community-based design participatory engagement and urban advocacy consulting strategic proposals. When considering the definition of live projects across the disciplines, it could be said that Live Projects comprise, ‘the negotiation of a brief, timescale, budget and product between an external organisation and an educational institution. The project must be structured to ensure that students gain learning that is relevant to their educational development.’ (Anderson & Priest, 2014, p. 13).

Live Projects have become recognised as a complementary pedagogy in architectural education. Engagement has increased noticeably since the University of Auburn’s Rural Studio in Alabama gained prominence in the 1990’s. (Oppenheimer & Hursley, 2002). In this special issue the focus is upon Live Project activities and outcomes across different disciplines, as a means to facilitate new forms of discourse around their pedagogic integrity and reach. In this issue, Benedict Brown’s comprehensive long-range survey of Live Projects in UK education in the fields of medicine, planning, law and architecture, gives a particularly helpful overview of the way that different disciplinary contexts have provoked, stimulated and nurtured various forms of Live Project education.

The featured papers and articles have been selected for their ability to complement and interconnect with the concepts and themes explored by other authors. As editors, we are particularly

concerned with facilitating an inclusive pedagogic critique of Live Projects that can be understood and applied across disciplines and that will enable the field to expand and evolve.

Live Projects bring opportunities to learn and practice disciplinary skills; test ideas; be creative and apply research findings. These activities are conducted in collaboration with real world people and places with all of the social and physical implications that this brings. They bridge the university and the world beyond (Dodd, Harrison & Charlesworth 2012; Anderson, 2014). The intensity and fully realised nature of the projects requires students to practice many skills simultaneously. They involve situated and experiential learning which stimulates intellectual reflection through hands on activity (Lave & Wenger, 1996; Kolb & Fry 1975; Webster, 2008).

By bringing together Live Project experiences and findings from educators from ten different disciplines for what is probably the first time, we can see that different disciplinary areas of expertise inform their Live Project practice in ways that Live Project educators in other disciplines have much to learn from. Some forms of expertise described here, such as the entrepreneurialism described by [Beresford and Michels](#), are of particular interest to Live Project educators in other disciplines who find that the breadth of challenges presented by the reality of Live Projects makes issues such as entrepreneurialism, ethics, creativity and collaboration become urgent and relevant in a way that was not previously the case when operating in non-live ways within the traditional academic boundaries of their own discipline.

The various papers and articles give open accounts and reflections on the nature of the challenges the projects presented to participants. The careful reflection and analysis of [Deplort-Voulgarelis, Perold and Jordaan](#) exemplifies this approach. The projects that involve inter-disciplinary collaboration such as the art and chemistry collaboration described by [Illingworth, McLean and Patel](#) demonstrate the Live Project approach as a good leveller. The complexities and realities of the live situation means that students and teachers from each discipline need to rely on each other to realise the project — realisation and delivery of the project being a prime motivator and unifier in any Live Project.

Reading all of the articles and papers in this special issue it is also possible to see broad themes and characteristic that recur in so many Live Projects, regardless of discipline:

Responsiveness and adaptability

Discussion of responsiveness and adaptability can be found in many different forms in this issue. For example in [Steane, Jolly and Luza](#)'s description of the importance of the journey rather than the destination and also in [Tang and Mitchell](#)'s reflections on the significance of the removal of customary boundaries to enable innovation "in the present". In describing their long-standing practice of taking their UK students of education on a visit to The Gambia to teach and collaborate with local teachers, [Hutchinson, Musgrave and Swarbrick](#) observe the significance of the unfamiliar situation in transforming the learning of their UK students as future teachers.

Community engagement

Community engagement is frequently described as an integral part of the process of Live Projects. [O'Grady](#) describes a participatory process in Agra, India involving local people and NGO's that enabled a negotiated and culturally specific response to "heritage" and urban regeneration to emerge. The Coney Island, New York project described by [Scheerlinck and Schoonjans](#) was carried out entirely on site. It addressed issues of territorial boundaries and local identity that were found through the process of engagement, building local connections and sense of involvement.

Ethics

From a review of a varied, established and extensive back catalogue of Live Projects in multiple disciplines carried out in University of the Arts London, [Austin](#) draws our attention to the ethical dilemmas that both sponsored and pro bono Live Projects tend to raise. Through concrete examples and discussion of the evolution and implementation of a university framework for good practice and a set of protocols, she points to the importance of clear aims; management to ensure student learning results; and systems for negotiation and protection of all parties' interests.

Practice and professionalism

A characteristic of Live Projects that is very often observed is the opportunity that they give students to engage with the world of work and to practice professional skills in a way that is not possible in conventional educational formats. [Goodliff, Palmer and Reeve](#) acknowledge the employability advantages that this gives students while also recognising the challenges that the variables of real situations present educators to ensure parity among the cohort and successful delivery of learning outcomes. Live Projects are

more complex than work placements. Students are responsible decision makers rather than apprentices. Edwards's description of Live Projects for Events Management students focuses on the learning that results from situating learning in professional contexts. She characterises this type of learning as active, authentic and experiential. Kurul brings an intriguing new perspective in her description of Live Projects as creating a bridge to higher education for mature students whose professional and life experiences are validated and valued explicitly in such situations.

Research and innovation

A particularly exciting and relatively under-explored quality of Live Projects is their potential to enable research and innovation, both in terms of stimulating new research questions and creating opportunities to apply theories in practice via experimentation, including students in the practice of research. Burford and Robertson demonstrate an excellent example of the latter in their inter-disciplinary collaboration with industry to invent and implement new construction techniques to produce an energy self-sufficient demonstration house. Bayl-Smith, Block and Pigram describe a more speculative phase, experimenting with the possibilities of new digital technologies to create large scale ribbed vaults in a laboratory setting. Orr considers the opportunities for enquiry-based learning that these types of research-led Live Projects are now opening up for students that were previously closed to them.

It is only through the development and sharing of Live Project teaching, learning and practice strategies such as those described by the contributors to this special issue that the particular and relevant pedagogical opportunities provided by Live Projects will become available to more students in all disciplines. We are very grateful to the contributors for their patience while we put this issue together and for their generosity in sharing their insights beyond their own discipline.

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From this issue:

A Case Study of Interdisciplinary Live Projects in Art and Chemistry

Vol. Eight - Issues 1 and 2 - April 2016

This article describes a set of interdisciplinary live projects that were carried out at Manchester Metropolitan University over the summer of 2014, between arts and chemistry undergraduate students. It was found that by working as part of an interdisciplinary team, the students were able to develop an understanding of the learning perspectives derived from different disciplines, thereby helping them to reflect on their own approaches to process and development. However, a number of difficulties also arose, mainly because of logistical and communication issues. By reflecting on the respective accomplishments and difficulties of the projects, this study provides a set of recommendations for interdisciplinary live projects, which should help the development and implementation of future schemes within higher education.

Transformative learning and visiting The Gambia: ongoing project

Vol. Eight - Issues 1 and 2 - April 2016

Introduction This ongoing project involves collaboration between staff from Oxford Brookes University (OBU) and the University of Worcester; OBU students, and Gambia-Extra Ltd. (small travel company formed by two English academics in 2012.). The students who took part in the

Exploring shared knowledge in a design-build project A story from Hangberg, Hout Bay

Vol. Eight - Issues 1 and 2 - April 2016

Introduction This case study tells the story of a design-build project in Hangberg, Hout Bay, South Africa during the first week of November 2014. The project was initiated through the Design Build Research Studio (DBRS) of the Cape Peninsula University

The Buksh Museum of Hobby-Craft

Vol. Eight - Issues 1 and 2 - April 2016

Introduction This article describes the last of three architecture projects carried out over two years' PhD research in the Indian city of Agra, completed in 2014. The projects aimed to expose ways that residents in the city's historical Tajganj neighbourhoods

Design for Industry: creating a level playing

field to accommodate multiple live briefs

Vol. Eight - Issues 1 and 2 - April 2016

Introduction The use of an external Live Project brief within a formal academic environment can bring with it logistical and conceptual challenges. Where students are required to seek out, secure and respond to their own client-led brief, the added variables

Streetscape Territories: on site workshop about participation in Coney Island, New York

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Streetscape Territories is the name given to an international research and design project that deals with the way buildings and properties are related to streets and how their inhabitants can give meaning to them. This project deals with models of

A Live Project to Improve Energy Performance of Retail Organisations

Vol. Eight - Issues 1 and 2 - April 2016

Introduction Live projects have long been used to facilitate learning in the built environment disciplines, particularly architecture. This in-depth case study is drawn from another built environment discipline: project management and evaluates the process of developing an energy assessment model

Showcasing best practice in Events Management

Education: The ‘Going Live’ project – University College Birmingham

Vol. Eight - Issues 1 and 2 - April 2016

Introduction In 2013-14, the Social Science cluster of the Higher Education Academy (HEA, 2013) prioritised work in three areas, one of which was ‘active and experiential learning in the Social Sciences’ (HEA, 2013). In response to this, University College Birmingham

Prototype Zero Energy Studio: A research-led, student-centred live build project

Vol. Eight - Issues 1 and 2 - April 2016

Background In 2011 the Department of Architecture and Planning at the University of Dundee embarked on a highly innovative interdisciplinary project to design and build a renewable powered, energy self-sufficient Passivhaus prototype at Dundee University Botanical Gardens. The remit was

Pass me the mixing bucket: The Ribbed Catalan studio as a design/research case study

Vol. Eight - Issues 1 and 2 - April 2016

The ‘Ribbed Catalan’, a large scale, ribbed tile vault, was the result of a collaborative design/build/research elective studio involving students enrolled in the M.Arch. program at the University of Technology Sydney, guided by masterclass instructors Prof. Dr Philippe Block of

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