

Cities, Communities and Homes: Is the Urban Future Livable?

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

The Civic University: The Millbank Atlas as Locally-Engaged Practice

- **Format:**

Written paper and verbal presentation

- **Author(s) Name:**

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- **University or Company Affiliation:**

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- **Abstract (300 words):**

'The Millbank Atlas' brings together researchers, students and residents to trace the neighbourhood of Chelsea College of Arts (University of the Arts London). The ongoing project creates meaning through conceptualising this local as comprised of reciprocal relations among the College and surrounding businesses, residential blocks, civil society groups, infrastructure, amenities and further aspects of this built and natural environment.

This paper considers how the creative happenings and artifacts that comprise the Atlas help to reinforce relations among the College and other local communities. We aim to understand the potential of live learning in the form of locally-engaged projects to produce a 'community of communities'. This includes the student body and its high number of international students. Their transient status contrasts with Millbank's large population of senior citizens. What the students and seniors share is an intercultural and intergenerational proximity to local issues that demand attention out of necessity, owing to rampant cuts in social services.

Our paper proposes the art and design university as a space for education that addresses these and other local issues. We will consider this with reference to a growing body of practice-based research on 'civic education for civil society'. [1] Central here are examples of alternative schools and curricula that piggyback on more formal institutions. [2] We will consider this dynamic with reference to Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger's understanding of communities of practice to appreciate the potential and complexity of learning environments for fostering more empowered, heterogeneous and resilient communities. [3] The live projects that drive the civic university address real-world needs, not of a distant other but of our neighbours and neighbourhood. Key here are the day-to-day interactions through which seniors/students/staff together produce Millbank as a particular part of London and how through coordinated action, creativity can enrich our shared experience.

- **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

Marsha Bradfield rides the hyphen as an archivist-artist-curator-educator-researcher-writer. This multi-barrelled practice is fired by the lived experience of authorship. Bradfield co-authors research-based experiments in collaborative cultural production with groups including Critical Practice Research Cluster, the Incidental Unit (formerly the Artist Placement Group) and Precarious Workers Brigade. These experiments often result in understanding that she later re-presents as publications, performative lectures and other dialogic artworks. Bradfield is based at Chelsea College of Arts, where she works as an associate researcher and associate lecturer and PhD supervisor. Her practice has been presented in Canada, England, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Scotland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

Shibboleth Shechter is a spatial design lecturer and researcher. Her research is pedagogic, concerned with embedding sustainability in the curriculum, through live projects. The projects aim to bring about change by focusing on the importance of engaging diverse stakeholders in the design process. Shibboleth worked as an architect and urban designer in a range of practices, focusing on environmental issues and community engagement. Shibboleth is currently a senior lecturer on the BA Interior and Spatial Design at Chelsea College of Arts. She has recently been appointed as a University of the Arts London teaching scholar.