Paper / Proposal Title:
Creating Balance Between Transformation and Preservation within UNESCO World Heritage Sites: Belper as a Case Study

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Presentation Method. I would like to:

i. present in person (without a written paper)

Abstract (300 words):
This practice-based research seeks to create a design-led strategy encouraging future development and sustainable design within a UNESCO World Heritage Site. My focus is the town of Belper in the Derwent Valley Mills in Derbyshire, an area currently under pressure from diverse and conflicting socio-economic forces, in need of a coherent regeneration plan. My research aims to contribute to such a plan, drawing from theoretical investigations of alternative urbanism and heritage studies, alongside extensive first-hand investigations of Belper and its surrounding industrial landscape as both a heritage site and living community.

UNESCO inscribed the Derwent Valley Mills on the World Heritage List in 2001, recognising it as a birthplace of the factory system in the early 19th century. It was here, for the first time, that new types of buildings associated with the large-scale industrial
production of cotton were inserted in an otherwise rural environment. The need to provide housing and other facilities for workers and managers resulted in the creation of the first modern industrial town. However, the manufacturing tradition of the eighteenth and nineteenth century is now completed. Thus, the town must find itself a new significance.

My hypothesis is that the unique urban nature of Belper can be regarded as an asset providing opportunities for regeneration and growth, rather than as a barrier or obstacle. My innovative approach seeks to regard the site as a palimpsest, a concept based on alternative urban theories, which recognises, reinforces, and enhances the distinctive characteristics of the historic environment while upgrading it for the 21st century. This is achieved through extensive and focused research of the existing layers of the historic built environment and its cultural significance, the natural environment, the social landscape, and the economic forces competing over the above. Knitting together the new and the existing, my research-led design proposal seeks to repair and upgrade Belper’s existing urban grain by promoting appropriate and viable mixed-use development to enhance the life of the local community while respecting and recognising the heritage listing and wider countryside setting.

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

Aslihan is an architect and researcher in heritage and urban history. Since 2004, she has been involved in a wide range of architectural projects internationally, looking at how to strengthen the links between heritage, identity and place.

Aslihan holds a BA(Hons) in Architecture from Karadeniz Technical University Turkey, a Grad. Dip. in Architecture from Kingston University and a MA in Architecture and Cultural Studies from Oxford Brookes University. Her academic work has been published in numerous magazines and journals in Britain and Turkey. For the last five years, she has been undertaking research on UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Aslihan’s practice investigates World Heritage Sites which are under pressure from diverse and conflicting socio-economic forces, in need of coherent regeneration plans. She is currently conducting her PhD research at Kingston University.