• Paper / Proposal Title:
Doing Disability Differently: rethinking how we teach design for access and inclusion

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• Abstract (300 words):
This paper argues that design for access to, and inclusion in, the built environment is framed very problematically across both practice and education. For practitioners accessibility is most often a matter of regulation and associated technical guidance, using skills developed on the job or in meeting professional requirements for accreditation. In architectural pedagogy it is usually avoided, or embedded in a 'special' one-off project, or dealt with only when an enthusiast teacher is involved with a program. Meanwhile, despite a widening participation agenda in the UK for example, only 1% of registered architects disclose a disability (against a national figure of at least 10%). For over 10 years The DisOrdinary Architecture Project has been challenging these norms, both in education and in practice. By working from the expertise and experience of disabled artists - in collaboration with educators, practitioners and related experts - we have co-investigated how engaging explicitly with disability and ability can open up design both creatively and critically.

The presentation will demonstrate how starting from difference, and the richness of bio- and neuro-diversity, can act as a creative generator; moving beyond simplistic divisions between architecture as either a visionary discipline (unfettered by the 'constraints' of practicalities such as accessibility) or a problem-solving occupation that must deal
mainly with everyday realities and demands. By outlining some action research projects DisOrdinary Architecture has undertaken internationally, valuably informed by disability studies, arts and activism, the paper will explore how rethinking disability not only offers new and exciting ways to design, but can also critique normative assumptions across both education and practice about who is valued, which bodies matter, and how this is embedded in frameworks, methods and attitudes. And it will make suggestions for how we can develop more integrative practices around learning and ‘doing’ access and inclusion.

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

Dr. Jos Boys is Co-Director of The DisOrdinary Architecture Project which develops creative collaborations between disabled artists and architectural students, educators and practitioners; with the aim of finding new and exciting ways to produce inclusive design of buildings and spaces. She is author of several important articles and books in the field, including Doing Disability Differently: an alternative handbook on architecture, dis/ability and designing for everyday life” (Routledge 2014) and as editor of “Disability, Space, Architecture: A Reader (Routledge 2017). Dr. Boys is also Course Director of Learning Environments MSc at the Bartlett School of Architecture University College London, where her research and teaching includes a central theme of access and inclusion for university learning spaces.