Education, Design and Practice – Understanding skills in a Complex World

• Paper / Proposal Title:
URBED+: Creating a synergistic model for practice, teaching and research

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• Abstract (300 words):
An innovative model for collaboration has recently been established between the global top ten Manchester School of Architecture (MSA) and world-renowned urbanism, built environment and design practice, URBED. Together they have formed URBED+ as a vehicle that combines academic and practice forms of knowledge to deliver research, advocacy, best practice guidelines, public engagement and education.

Existing collaborative models, such as KTPs, often leave the industry partner(s) feeling burned; are typically responses to one-off funding opportunities which fail to build a trajectory of sustained contributions to knowledge; and do not engage with teaching. Practitioner contributions to teaching tend to be fixed term, focused on delivery and peripheral to the course development. The model conceived for URBED+ challenges these deficiencies, acting as a collaborative vehicle based on an ongoing commitment from the two partner organisations.

Embedded within this vehicle is a PGT MArch atelier in which URBED staff are integral in the design and delivery, and PGR positions based on mutual areas of research interest which in turn feeds into the atelier’s activities. The first PGR appointment has already been made - the funded candidate will pursue research into neighbourhood-scale
retrofit of terraced houses and will be jointly supervised and jointly hosted by both MSA and URBED. The project and one of the atelier’s briefs strategically align and the PhD researcher actively contributing research-led teaching from practice-based research.

This paper will present a detailed look at the process of setting up URBED+ and demonstrate how other collaborations could be formed using this model. It will present the terms agreed between the two organisations, the management structure, objectives, activities and resourcing as a template for others. It will identify the challenges encountered in negotiating the different cultures, processes and agendas of academia and practice, and discuss how to navigate this and create alignment.

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

Dr Montague is a Senior Lecturer in Architecture at Manchester School of Architecture (MSA). Her research focuses on practice-based/design-led models, particularly for urban design and architecture, the creative process and the role of theory in urban design. For the last 8 years she has worked internationally on developing methodological approaches to integrate practice within research processes whilst meeting traditional research criteria. Currently, Lucy is leading the strategic creation of an MSA model for practice-led research and is responsible for developing practice-based research outputs from colleagues’ practice for assessment in REF2021. She has also recently established an innovative model for collaborative research with world-renowned industry partner URBED, forming URBED+ as a joint venture with MSA that combines academic and practice forms of knowledge to deliver research, advocacy, best practice guidelines and public engagement in urban design issues. She has embedded a new postgraduate MArch studio for 40 students within this, in a novel collaborative approach that combines research-led teaching with the practice experience of URBED. In parallel, she continues to pursue her own individual research focusing most recently on her first research monograph – ‘Desire Lines: How the way we draw affects the cities we build’ to be published by Routledge in 2020.