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

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Small Settlements Research Projects

• Author(s) Name:
Sally Stone // Reader
John Lee // Senior Lecturer + Architect
Laura Sanderson // Senior Lecturer

• University or Company Affiliation:
Manchester School of Architecture

• Abstract (300 words):
Deep significance is attached to familiar places by individuals and by communities, and thus, complex relationships can develop between the residents and the place that they inhabit. This quality that is present in the nature of the buildings and the streets is often generated by the ordinary actions of local people, many of who believe that their identity is essentially tied to the place that they inhabit.

Continuity in Architecture, a post-graduate studio for research, practice and teaching at the Manchester School of Architecture has been working directly with the local communities of Small Settlements surrounding the city, to develop meaningful and productive proposals for the development of the built environment.
Collaborative practices are embedded within this pedagogy. Partnerships have been established that break the boundary of the traditional educational establishment. These include relationships with local architects, with official organisations: town councils, planning departments, Twentieth Century Society, and English Heritage, and with unprofessional societies such as Neighbourhood Planning groups, and Church committees.

The Atelier encourages an awareness of particular craft-making processes, this practice goes beyond the studio and into the factory; for example, terracotta works and cast-iron foundry. Students developed detailed and ornamental elements that were directly forged from their understanding of material and place.

The students also worked with academics from different disciplines; including English, Ceramics and Geography. Relationships were established with poets, who interpreted the place in a similar manner with vastly differing results (verbal rather than visual).

The first section of the paper will discuss the embedded nature of this radical approach within the contextual practices of the atelier. The second section will explore a series of collaborative live design projects. The final section will show how these research-through-design projects have directly led to significant developments in the public planning of local places.

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

Sally Stone
Sally is the Master of Architecture Programme Leader and Director of the Continuity in Architecture Atelier; a studio for research, practice and teaching, at the Manchester School of Architecture. The atelier seeks to find ways of deriving delightful, rigorous, and measured responses to small settlements and historically sensitive contexts. Sally lectures on installation art, connections between art and architecture and building re-use and as such has a wide knowledge of art practice especially in the context of the built environment.

Sally is an internationally recognised expert on the subject of the interior and the interpretation and remodelling of the existing situation. She has written extensively about the subject, and her research profile includes a number of published books, inclusion in edited books and journals, invitations to keynote or
speak at international conferences, and requests to direct European workshops. Her forthcoming monograph, ‘UnDoing Buildings’ will be published in the summer of 2019, followed by ‘Remember Reveal Construct: Reflections upon the Contingency, Usefulness and Emotional Resonance of Architecture, Buildings and Context’ (with Sanderson, L. 2020).

Sally is the co-recipient of the UK Government sponsored 2014 Heritage Heroes Award in recognition of her work to save the Preston Bus Station.

John Lee
John studied Architecture at the Bartlett School and UCL concluding with a Masters in Advanced Architectural Studies, working with what is now the Space Syntax Laboratory. This experience led to a concern for the link between building technology, texture and materiality, and spatial configuration - in short, the physical expression of architectural form.

Having spent nine years with Grimshaw, he subsequently established his own practice in Manchester, Arca. The company is a vehicle for testing theoretical idea through a diverse range of project types.

John has taught with the Continuity in Architecture unit since 2004, developing his interest in design techniques which regard cities and buildings as artefacts of socio-spatial activity. Working to investigate all aspects of context in a rigorous, inquisitive manner, the intention is to learn from traditional architectural means for achieving urban continuity.

Research interests are explored through the Continuity Small Settlements Group, working with towns, villages and small settlements to characterise and synthesise distinctive places to live and work. This is achieved through Design Guides and research activities delivered in part through the postgraduate studio. Other personal interests include the role of ornament in architectural design, as it relates to the craft and technology of building.

Laura Sanderson
Laura is a senior lecturer at Manchester School of Architecture and qualified architect. Her work is underpinned by the principals of Continuity in Architecture. The atelier focuses upon the process of analysing and understanding the nature and the qualities of place in order to develop new buildings and other elements
within the urban environment. Over the last few years, the atelier has discussed Small Settlements, especially those surrounding the city of Manchester; producing research outputs in Bollington (2016), Bakewell (2017) and Wilmslow (2018) including exhibitions, articles, book chapters and built interventions. This year the atelier has studied Rochdale, working in the Heritage Action Zone of the High Street on projects that will culminate in a substantial exhibition in June 2019.

Recently Laura co-curated UnDoing, an exhibition at Castlefield Gallery (with Stone, S.), featuring the work of a number of international artists and architects, exploring how buildings, places and artefacts are re-used, reinterpreted and remembered. These themes will be further explored in ‘Remember, Reveal, Construct’ to be published in 2020 (with Stone, S.). Other pedagogic research includes the MSA Events Programme, (with Jolley, V. AAE, 2017). This paper documented 10 years of collaborative projects with impact in the city and beyond.