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How emergent is pedagogical practice in urban design?

Five decades of urban design teaching and constant refining of the definition of urban design have seen this field of study grown substantially both in scale and in scope, where education is done through design-based reflective learning that embeds the comparative knowledge of learning models and methods. By jointly interrogating concepts and methodologies, students, educators, communities, policy-makers and practitioners, are able to creatively design, plan and produce livable and inclusive urban environments. In the last two decades, academic research and reporting of scholarship of practice has also grown exponentially, most of which in these very pages, so it seems fitting that the Journal of Urban Design would dedicate its attention to the topic of *emergent pedagogy in urban design* in its 21st anniversary, reflecting the maturity of the discipline. If indeed urban design is the '*art and science of placemaking*' there is no doubt that our fragmented societies need as many urban designers as possible. But how are urban designers shaped by their urban design education?

The nature of urban design education and academic identity

It is becoming common practice in higher education for academic staff to reflect, as a matter of professional routine, on their practice as educators in their subject discipline. This exercise contributes not only for the individual development of the reflective (educator) practitioner, but most importantly for the development of the future practice of teaching and the shaping of the future young professionals. Debates on academic identity in the Higher Education (HE) arena 'attempt to unpick notions of academic ontology (how academics come to be) so as to help form an understanding of how academics might form epistemologies (how academic come to know)' (Quigley, 2011). Regardless how shifting, complex, and subject to change it might be, the academic identity of each academic is intrinsically individual. Nevertheless, despite how singular and 'away from the norm' one is, each academic has commonalities with peers, groups and institutions. Academic identity is not only determined by the individual, but also by the communities of practice to which professionals belong. These commonalities are set into defined frameworks. What then are these commonalities that might contribute to academic identity, which can help to situate and define an urban design academic in terms of personal standing both within and without their particular institution and their personal and professional networks?

The term 'community' can be described as a collection of individuals who possess similar goals, values and interests, even a 'mission'. The communitarian perspective devised by Henkel (2005) sees academic identity as a function of community membership, i.e. the discipline itself and HE/the institution, where each individual positions him/herself in relation to individual and collective values that sustain the dynamics of their relationship(s). Disciplines are given tangible form and defined boundaries in the units, departments or faculties of universities and their role

in the shaping and the substance of academic identities are reinforced (Quigley, 2011) in those settings. In parallel, the professional community and its recognised academies by uttering the contents of professional education and knowledge production, also shape the profile of its profession's educators.

The profession of an urban designer does not have as yet an established recognised academy, such as that of the planner (i.e. the Royal Town Planning Institute [RTPI] in the UK; American Planning association [APA] in the USA, for example) or of the architect (i.e. the Royal Institute of British Architects [RIBA] in the UK, the American Institute of Architects [AIA] in the USA), and urban design is currently taught under one or both of these disciplines/faculties, as a field of study within the built environment discipline which encompasses several distinctive fields, such as architecture, planning, urban design, landscape architecture, construction and project management, space syntax, environment, heritage – just to name a few. Each country's academy accredits the future planner's or architect's educational curriculum in each Higher Education Institution (HEI), therefore shaping not only the future [planner/architect/] urban designer but also the urban designer's educator (who did not necessarily have an urban designer's education him/herself). This state of affairs challenges Freidson (2001) who has defined a[n academic] profession as an occupation in which members control their own work.

Pressures, challenges and credentialism in urban design education

From the 1990s, Higher Education Institutions (HEI) have followed the rise of new public managerialism (Clarke and Newman, 1997) which seeks 'to produce in individuals higher levels of flexibility, productivity and co-operation within national economic objectives for the economic benefit of the nation' (Archer, 2008) challenging in its rise the established notions of professionalism, the boundaries of academic work and the identity of the academic, in sum, the academic profile. HE has embraced the market approach and new forms of relationships, knowledge production and academic engagement are being driven by technology (Davies and Petersen, 2005: 33) and associated phenomena such as globalisation and the knowledge-exchange economy (Dillon, 2007). Globalisation is changing how knowledge is produced and exchanged. Students can now access knowledge themselves from a variety of different sources and are no longer reliant on their own tutors or even academics in general to transmit specialist knowledge (Dillon, 2007). The globalisation and commodification of knowledge signifies the demise of academics as purveyors of specialist knowledge because the academy is no longer the only definer of what knowledge is (Moon, 1999). In addition, intensification and de-personalised email communication may also threaten what many academics value: their pedagogic relationship with students and scope for critical analysis (Levidow, 2002: 2). These concerns potentially compromise traditional notions of professionalism premised on direct communication and appropriate professional boundaries.

Following the changes in HEI, the profile of the built environment academy appears to have changed significantly over the last ten years in terms of entry qualifications, experience and demography – it is now more international and more representative of the population and the overall profession. As such, HE is seen as a source of economic (whilst providing additional income to universities) and human capital (whilst promoting equal educational opportunities

and increasing diversity within HEIs) achievable through a shift from an elite to a mass HE system. Nevertheless, the economic rationalist imperatives can potentially drive the educational mission towards an 'education for the market' (Aronowitz, 2000) or a 'learning factory' (Tooley, 2000) for new skills. Consequently, HE becomes more synonymous with 'trainability' and 'employability' (Levidow, 2002). In this context, is the identity of the HE academic shaped by/for the market? Will it compromise the pedagogic relationship with students and create dissonance and role conflict among academics (i.e. through, workload intensification and the undermining of traditional notions of professionalism)?

Underpinning traditionalist HE principles rely on equal educational opportunities, social justice and an ethic of care for students and academics. The new *status quo* can potentially lead to the fragmentation of educational provision and could compromise the pedagogical relationship because they arguably hasten the pace for universities to rely more and more on virtual learning environments and technologies which facilitate and endorse 'learning at a distance'. In our contemporary society which thrives on e-social networks (i.e. facebook, twitter) making use of these technologies can also facilitate knowledge and learning dissemination as reaching out to increased number of students. It also provides a way of managing with these increased numbers through additional resources for learning support.

Changes in HE in the last twenty years have placed increasing pressure on the built environment academic and its relationship with practice and market changes. And is the planning academy *an intrinsic part of each profession or an eccentric fringe group or contract supplier of education services*? For built environment academia, service-learning moves away from the narrow notion of providing a service to the community to a more liberating and transformative approach that links service and learning (Angotti et al, 2011). Service-learning is a recognized teaching and learning strategy integrating instruction and reflection. Urban designer academics *do need to keep up with change and* increase the links with practice, and need to reconnect and increase dialogue between them, and most importantly, link academic research to practice and policy application. Key concepts in the emerging trend towards service-learning are 'transformation' and 'reflection'. Without reflection we would unlikely learn from ours and others experiences and integrate the transformative knowledge into future practice. Tangential to taught courses but essential to pedagogy is the synthesis of teaching and research efforts within the academic realm.

There is already considerable amount of literature in the nexus teaching vs research in higher education. Deakin (2006) looks into evidence based assessment, particularly on the value that students place in their teachers' research and the enhancement in the quality of their learning experience. This last point argues and debates the issues raised by Shepard (2000) and Yorke (2008) concerning the negative impacts that pressures on higher education and research overload has at the expense of teaching and/or availability to see/talk to students. Deakin brings on the debate that research-led teaching is *an active process of learning by doing, something the student does and actively participates in* (Deakin, 2006: 83). Research-led teaching uses methods and techniques in class (in project-based, research-led class) empowering students with skills and learning outcomes *assisting with the development of*

advanced problem solving and critical analysis (ibid, 2006: 82). Also, it places particular weight on *meaningful exchange, based on equal measures of mutual respect and trust between staff and students* (ibid, 2006: 83). Enlarging the debate, Griffiths (2004) acknowledges teaching can be:

	<i>curriculum</i>	<i>teaching</i>	<i>research</i>
research-led	subject content content selected is directly based on the specialist research interests of the staff	'information transmission model' emphasis is on understanding research findings rather than research processes	little attempt is made to capture the two-way benefits
research-oriented	Equal weight on understanding the processes by which knowledge is produced in the field as on learning the codified knowledge that has been achieved	emphasis is on inquiry skills and on acquiring a 'research ethos'	more diffuse research experience
research-based	inquiry-based activities	experiences of staff in processes of inquiry are highly integrated into the students learning activities	scope for two-way interactions between research and teaching is deliberately exploited
research-informed	draws consciously on systematic inquiry into the teaching and learning process itself		

Source: Adapted from Griffiths, 2004

All in all, urban design is taught within programmes designed to provide an academic and vocational education with a range of professional career opportunities in mind enabling students with relevant theories, methodologies, skills and techniques taken from both the social science and design disciplines aiming to develop their capacity for creative thinking and problem-solving, whilst enabling them to efficiently use the key transferable skills learned. However, because each HE is unique and follow different methods and approaches to reach its mission, thus different cultural identities are also created which are themselves subject to different states of flux. With HEI and professional academy in a continuous state of flux where there have been a number of significant changes in the two last decades, reflective practice is paramount, in particular when change is to be expected within periods of financial austerity that will see education budgets substantially cut and where the rise in university fees is likely to induce further threat if resulting in a reduction in student numbers.

Exemplars of Urban Designer's Educators

Some might see the link between teaching and research as a one-way street where students are the recipients of their educator's research. I see it as a two-way interaction where one needs and informs the other, thrives from it and inexcusably use and support each other. This special issue also shows us examples of that partnership. The nine points of view offered by eminent academics at the start of this special issue take us through a journey of pedagogical reflections. From the definition of urban design to the place and scale of where urban design

should be taught and learned, through the evolving and emerging parameters of scope, scale, and the students learning experience, to 'what's next' for future research and scholarship, their narrative introduces the six papers that form the essence of this special issue. The papers that follow voice empirical case study best practice, a needle in a haystack of best practice around the world, but nonetheless representative of the evolutionary nature of urban design and a multitude of pedagogical practices, that more and more undeniably embrace collaborative and participatory approaches and the use of technology to distill locally situated relationships. Places need to encourage and promote socio-spatial activities, if necessary act as places of/for reconciliation, where diversity and individuality co-exist peacefully. Regardless if you (the reader) and us (the authors) see ourselves as urban designers (albeit theorists, educators, learners or practitioners), this special issue is a testimony to a shared passion, to have urban design and urban design education at the forefront of 'making better [human] places'.

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Special Issue Editor

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