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Experimenting with Alumni Pedagogy

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Abstract

Project Office, Leeds Beckett University's in-house staff and student led architectural practice launched an *alumni ideas competition* for the Sustainable Technologies and Landscape Research Centre (STaLRC). The winning entry established the design and the winning team were engaged in a design consultancy role for further development of the work.

This case study describes an exploration of the architectural competition format through *experimenting with alumni pedagogy*.

The institution's association with its students is almost severed once they become alumni. By extending pedagogy, through a competition, new possibilities have arisen between this School of Architecture and its recent former students, and for academia and practice.

The case study explains a procedural exploration through the STaLRC competition, starting with defining the competition through a Design Guide 'brief' produced by second year undergraduate students of architecture. The role of Project Office as the educational and practice choreographer sets the distinctive anchoring of the project. The competition process, managed by the writers, deals with the duality of providing a 'winning' design that meets client's complex requirements e.g. affordability, and the setting of an equally important educational purpose.

This paper considers how an architectural competition, used as a pedagogic tool, is harnessed in a post formal educational setting. An output for example is that alumni competitions can be legitimately situated in the (Continuing Professional Development) CPD framework, viably enabling UK schools of architecture to participate, fulfilling a professional developmental remit.

In conclusion, as the STaLRC competition is framed in an educational setting, the learning outcomes of participants are of equal importance to the quality of entries. This methodology ensures continued pedagogical value in the transition between education and profession. Recent alumni are vital and unencumbered, fledgling professionals and through the setting of this competition have been provided with their space to fledge.

Keywords: Live Project Pedagogy, Practice Related Research, Alumni, Architecture, Competitions

Introduction

In *Experimenting with Alumni Pedagogy* the authors extended six years of working with architecture live projects through the competition format with undergraduate and postgraduate students to recent alumni of Leeds Beckett University's (formerly Leeds Metropolitan University). This seemingly small transition has made an important impact to the way Project Office considers its relationship to the architectural community and pedagogy. The paper is a case study that develops a methodology for alumni engagement through pedagogically driven design competitions.

Project Background

Following guidance in the 2011 HEFCE report 'Performance in Higher Education Estates' Leeds Beckett University were required to ensure 100% of their Estate rated A – B on the RICS Condition Standards (2005). Rated in the lowest category D "*Inoperable, or serious risk of failure or major breakdown*", the existing Landscape Resource Centre (LRC) building based at Leeds Beckett's Headingley Campus is the penultimate to be upgraded.

Nestled in the woods the LRC is a unique teaching and research space that houses Landscape Architecture students. With bio wildlife habitats, mature and freshly created experimental gardens students can gain valuable experience working with plants, planting design, ecology, environmental art and construction. It is located at the far end of the campus and currently accessed by an unmade road known as Queens Walk. The track terminates at Victoria Arch, MP for Ripon William Beckett's 1858 tribute to Queen Victoria and her visit to Leeds, now isolated in dense woodland.

In an additional University strand, the success of Leeds Sustainability Institute led to a need for a materials testing laboratory for the advancement of new technologies. The solution is to combine the two functions in the proposed Sustainable Technologies and Landscape Resource Centre (STaLRC) to replace the existing LRC building.

Given the successful delivery of the BIG Lottery funded New Wortley Community Centre (NWCC) by Leeds Beckett University's in house Architectural consultancy practice Project Office (PO), co-directed by Architecture Lecturers Craig Stott and Simon Warren, the University appointed PO to act as Architects and Contract Administrator for all RIBA Work Stages of the STaLRC, beginning at Stage 1 with definition of

the brief and a total budget of £819,000. *“Project Office is a design and research collaboration of staff and students based within the Leeds School of Architecture, Leeds Beckett University. It is an architecture consultancy concerned with ethical, social and resilient architecture and design. We work with like-minded communities, organisations and individuals.”* (Warren & Stott, 2014)



Existing LRC Building. Photo by PO

At approx. 200m² the building is to contain a laboratory allowing an environmental chamber to be installed for climatic testing of building materials, a teaching space designed to open out onto the surrounding landscape, an office with kitchenette for 6 members of staff, and sufficient storage to meet Client needs. In late 2015 PO were asked to produce a feasibility study based upon the m² cost of NWCC's recently completed building. The exercise suggested that whilst extremely tight, the project was possible for the budget, and PO were subsequently appointed to deliver on that expectation.

The programme is complicated by the two users being for different, and previously unlinked, departments. Consequently the Stakeholder team PO assembled to deliver the project incorporates representation from both factions. A further necessity is the consultation of students from the courses designated to populate the space. Once established, PO oversaw simplification and amendments to the strategic brief such that it became achievable within budget whilst retaining the aspirational notions the project demands.

Project Office operate as a conduit to provide students with a construction led education through the vehicle of Live Projects, defined by Rachel Sara (2006) as:

“a type of design project that is distinct from a typical studio project in it's engagement of real clients or users, in realtime settings. Students are taken out of the studio setting, and repositioned in the 'real-world'. This external involvement tends to result in students producing something that is of value to the client/user group, which might range from ideas, feasibility reports, or research, to a completed design scheme, a construction or other intervention.”

PO has 12 'Rules of Agency', which demonstrate the ethical principles and approach to occupying a space concurrently within the academic institution and architecture practice. One of these rules states *“To create opportunities for student and alumni engagement with a range of educational and formative experiences.”* (Warren & Stott 2016) Further PO believes that architectural educators have a societal responsibility to not only *“expose students to the social impact of their practice but also to make it the heart of pedagogic purpose.”* This learning does not end at graduation, but continues through the fostering of an ongoing relationship and dialogue between the School of Architecture and its alumni. The intention being that the *'practice related research'* (Candy, 2006) at the core of PO's has a significantly positive social impact both through the work of the practice itself but also through the engagement of alumni in the wider architectural field.

Through discussion it was determined that due to the tight timescales involved, the scale and complexity of the project being appropriate, and the opportunity for PO to appoint the winning team as consultants, that the concept design stage for STaLRC should be realised through a competition for Leeds School of Architecture, and Landscape Architecture, alumni. A prize fund of £500 was made available to be distributed at the judges' discretion, and the winning entrant would be invited to work as a consultant to PO on the remainder of the project.



Completed NWCC Building. Photo by PO

The Notion of Competitions in Architectural Education

In proposing a competition the writers were aware of the paradoxical situation that they had created. As Farshid Moussavi (2013) writes: *“Competitions are driven by the desire to go beyond what already exists – unthought-of architecture – whereas commissions are mostly demand-driven and often by those of the market.”* With STaLRC the writers had created a condition where both co-exist.

The competition format is important for producing culture and moments of knowledge. 'Some competitions act as

controversial moments, while others, as experimental moments in the design disciplines' (Cucuzzella & Chupin, 2016 citing Yaneva, 2012; Lipstadt, 1989, 1991). Competitions can provide a valuable strategy within architectural education for they expose the entrant to the canon of advancing architectural knowledge and empower them with the ability to challenge the architectural establishment. Consequently the architectural competition is a relevant tool to push the boundaries of live project education as it confronts the contradictions of advancing architectural knowledge, experimentation and production of a real work for a client. The paradoxical is a condition of the live project.

'Paradoxes are the simultaneous presence of contradictions' (Sundaramurthy & Lewis, 2003 cited in Vera & Crossan 2007). *"Improvisation is the spontaneous and creative process of attempting to achieve an objective in a new way"* (Vera & Crossan, 2004, 2005 cited in Vera & Crossan 2007). In live project paradoxes, one method of reconciling them is through learning to think and do through improvisation. The defining paradox of the live project is the simultaneous amalgamation of academy and practice, beneath which further multifarious paradoxes emerge. These range from the prosaic to philosophical thinking. Architecture is not straightforward, and this messy learning environment is pedagogically significant.

PO exists because the authors believe the complexities facing architects are often oversimplified in architectural education so that the skills, problem solving methods, people relationships, and real life complexities necessary to successfully navigate a life in practice are not sufficiently learned, and are therefore, neither framed nor reflected upon intellectually. The work PO undertakes and the related situated learning in design studio are intended to address these shortfalls, with competitions forming part of the strategy as the format is a practical way to deliver the initial design work of a live project, but it is also motivated by pedagogy in that the learning environment simulates aspects of architectural practice.

PO has been combining the architectural competition and live project to situate bespoke learning environments since 2009 with undergraduate and postgraduate students. These are usually done over a short period of time within a design studio module and students achieve credits for their endeavours. Students often work in teams and a judging panel of tutors and clients rank the work. To date, PO have overseen the construction of three winning competition designs, providing a range of students invaluable experience relating to design, construction detailing, hands on construction, and the bolstering of CVs.



Morley Newlands Playscape; a previous Alumni competition. Photo by PO

Alumni Competitions

The research undertaken in support of this paper has suggested that the notion of architectural alumni competitions to design live projects is currently unique to Project Office and the Leeds School of Architecture.

Evidence of engagement with recent graduates elsewhere is minimal. The RIBA occasionally runs ideas competitions for students and recent graduates and websites are emerging where interested parties are setting student competitions, which sometimes are extended to recent graduates. For example Young Architects Competitions, its website states, *"YAC is an association whose aim is to promote architectural competitions amongst young designers – no matter if graduates or students."* However the writers have noted that the rules of competition state that ineligibility occurs if *"The team does not include a competitor younger than 35."*

An exciting website is www.120hours.no. Magnus Asker Pettersen, founder and director, in discussion with the writers wrote, *"When we first started 120 HOURS, the motivation was to establish an arena where students could challenge the institutional establishment. In this case this was the Norwegian architectural education system. As our web page states: 'In 2010, three students at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design wanted to create a new arena where Norwegian students could introduce themselves to the industry. They wanted to challenge, motivate and promote the most skilled, most innovative and committed students in the architecture profession. The result was the student competition 120 HOURS'. One of the most important aspects*

of the pedagogical part of 120 HOURS is to promote critical thinking and theory in contemporary architecture."

There are a few other European models relating to student involvement in competitions, but involvement of recent alumni is minimal.

Following PO's successful use of competitions for undergraduate and postgraduate architecture students, it stands to reason, and the research undertaken for this paper supports the suggestion, that alumni competitions are a good platform for continued engagement with students post graduation. There sits a unique moment of critical thinking where new knowledge can be generated as academic organisers engage with the creative power of fledging graduates, before they have been coerced into the norms of practice.

A competition needs to define itself very clearly; its parameters are strictly set out. This means that through clear communication, recent graduates can compete equally in the process wherever they have ended up after their studies.

Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1995) argue that learning is necessarily situated, a process of participation in communities of practice, and that newcomers join such communities via a process of 'legitimate peripheral participation' - or learning by immersion in the new community and absorbing its modes of action and meaning as a part of the process of becoming a community member. The interest here is in a new community of practice, that which brings together recent alumni and the academy.

As a continuation of the live project work which occupies both academic and practice territories it became obvious to extend this to recent graduates as they sit at the paradox's apex. They are the most affected by tensions and contradictions of practice versus academy, having landed in practice with the realities of financial and client pressures after previously spending five years in full time architectural education. The juxtaposition is severe, meaning recent graduates are a fertile educational opportunity. Experimentation with a new learning community of alumni affords the prospect to encounter previously unexplored subjects.

Herein lies the paradox of the STaLRC live project and alumni competition. The project in its academic context wants to create something new in the discipline but as live project it is a real commission with a client. The contradiction is embraced. PO's intention is to continue the enrichment and knowledge development of its alumni by encouraging their engagement in a paradoxical learning environment.

Production of the Competition

To initiate the alumni competition a briefing pack needed producing for distribution. Continuing PO's pedagogical

approach of live project learning, the necessity became an opportunity. As part of Leeds Beckett's Futures Fest, a series of events designed to equip students with employability and enterprise related skills held every January, PO organised work placement opportunities at Leeds city region architecture practices for BA2 & 3 undergraduate architecture students, including PO itself as a participating practice. In January 2016 the five BA2 students who chose to undergo their placement with PO were tasked with creating the briefing pack for the competition. Through undertaking the required initial research, site enquiries and collating existing data and reports the students constructed a Design Guide which acted as competition brief to be sent out to all alumni alongside the Rules of Engagement and a detailed cad map of the site. This was distributed via email in early April 2016 to all alumni from Parts 1, 2 & 3 from the previous five years.



Design Guide Review Session. Photo by PO

Alex, a mature BA2 student who took part reflected afterwards, *"On the first day we were given a brief asking us to create a Design Guide for an alumni competition while making the end goal very clear. I quickly learned how to work in a team by matching up tasks with individual strengths to achieve our collective end goal. PO taught us some of the skills and methods necessary to accomplish this, for example how to interact with a client and prepare for meetings to make them run smoothly."*

Alex also said *"The opportunity to work with Project Office was a really rewarding one. Being 29, I have experienced other professions but this was my first experience of an architectural work place which was a completely new side compared with education. A great deal of emphasis was placed on how to behave professionally in order to work successfully."*

Another student Jamil, focused on a particular learning outcome, *"it was the pace of production that surprised me. I spent the first two days producing three sketches of the existing site until Simon told me that wasn't good enough. We discussed prioritising tasks and outputs to maximise return and from then on I did much more. I realised my struggles in*

Design Studio were down to timekeeping and decision-making rather than talent. This really helped me in Semester 2."

The students clearly value the opportunity offered them and appear to have learnt valuable lessons helping prepare them for future employment. In the case of Jamil, the placement also had a positive effect on his studies, actively altering his approach to Design Studio for the module succeeding his time with PO.

Verification of the document quality produced by the BA2 placement students came from alumni Rachel, who said *"the initial briefing document was informative and also quite impartial in that it didn't lead you down any particular path. It was left open enough for us to suggest something unique and yet it still felt very real."* This highlights an important element within the paradoxical relationship of alumni competitions; impartiality. PO attempted to remain independent of the process, wanting the Design Guide to be informative but not commanding, allowing the entrants free reign for creativity and inspiration. This is extremely difficult as PO had opinions relating to design philosophy, but also the necessity to obtain an entry which was theoretically conceived, aesthetically engaging, practically functional, and deliverable for the budget.

Ultimately PO trusted the process, believing the enigma would be resolved by the entrants' own capabilities.



Alumni Competition Site Visit. Photo by PO

Entries into the Competition

Competitors, able to work as individuals or in teams, had three weeks to produce 4 x A3 concept design sheets. Content was at the entrants discretion but guidance suggested to include relevant information allowing the judges a clear understanding of the project, plus clearly expressed ideas for minimising both cost and energy consumption during construction and in-use will be favourably considered. An open site visit was organised for the end of week one which was well attended and offered the competitors a key

insight into the unique location of the project and the beauty in which their proposition would nestle. This proved significant as four of the five shortlisted schemes were submitted by those who visited the site and entered solutions which truly sought to embed themselves as elements within the landscape.

The timescale was purposefully tight. Given the majority of entrants would be employed full time, PO estimated three weeks of free time was analogous to a high-pressured office situation producing a feasibility study. 4 x A3 sheets meant the output was not significant and again in keeping with office procedure. General feedback suggested the project framework had the desired effect with entrant Steven saying *"The Briefing document and information was well prepared and the site visit enjoyable and informative, these made the project easy to dive into. For me and Bo it was an irresistible brief, and I am quite green-eyed at the winners. The short timescale was perhaps challenging, but it did attract us to the project thinking this should be fun and quick, and it allowed ideas to come to the fore. Digital submission and number of boards was good."*

An aspect left open by PO, but which proved to be significant, was the composition of teams. None of the shortlisted entries were submitted by individuals. In practice it is rare for young architects in the early stages of their career to be working in isolation. The reasons are plentiful, with the adage of two heads being better than one ringing true. It was a factor noted by Martin, an alumni who entered as an individual; *"The main mistake I made was not collaborating, which allows more man hours overall and a broader range of skills feeding into the project. My approach was to do my own design and sit down with friends for a discussion, but this simply did not work as well as having a compatriot to work on the project with. I'd definitely like to enter another competition if the opportunity arose, and if I was doing it again I'd aim to work as part of a team."*

This reflects another virtue of the live project environment that collaboration is at the heart of the production as opposed to the singular authorship of traditional design studio. In the paper 'The impact of social interaction on student learning', (Hurst et al. 2013) provide evidence of developing social interaction strategies to their teaching. Students on three courses participated and were consulted for feedback, *"The findings reveal that students in all three courses perceived that social interaction improved their learning by enhancing their knowledge of literacy and teaching and their critical thinking and problem-solving skills."* These findings support the outcomes witnessed by PO for the STaLRC competition where the successful entrants self selected groups within their alumni to work together.



Competition Judging Event. Photo by PO

Judging of the Competition

Thirteen entries were received from a strong array of alumni. To celebrate and judge the work PO organised, with help from Enterprise, a publicly open and advertised awards night where all schemes entered into the competition were displayed and their contributors invited. Prior to the event the steering group under the guidance of PO, selected five shortlisted schemes to present their project at the awards evening. Each team had their A3 sheets projected and 10 minutes to talk through their proposal, followed by a 10 minute session where the judges asked difficult questions to ensure they fully understood the scheme. One of the presentations required a Skype call to St Lucia as the shortlisted entry was submitted by two graduates now working in the Caribbean.

A reflection made by virtually every one of the participating alumni has been the social aspect of the judging event being a highlight. Bongani said *"I really enjoyed the alumni competition. Firstly it was great to catch-up with old colleagues/friends from Leeds and for me an excuse to visit a city that I love and have good memories of."* Antonia agreed, *"The evening was great and we all enjoyed it! Great to see old friends and catch-up."* The authors feel this is an aspect usually overlooked within education, social interaction and enjoyment, but one which clearly played a significant role for the STaLRC competition participants and is likely linked to the successful team interaction of the shortlisted schemes.

Bongani sought to go even further with his dissection of the judging event, suggesting that the collegiate approach and supportive network developed by PO had potentially significant learning outcomes for the profession at large, *"The presentation evening was very good and well attended, if this was the norm for architectural competitions then I would imagine that the public / users and other architects would certainly understand each other better – and we might even discover shared values or ideas! We definitely learned something from the relaxed style of the winning presentation which seemed to resonate with the honest, collaborative, give-a-damn, ethos of Project Office and in the end – the client group. If there's another competition opportunity, I'd*

love to be involved." PO had not anticipated such an outcome, but Bongani's comment exemplifies the paradox in which the alumni competition format exists; straddling practice and academia for the benefit and continued learning of those willing to engage in the process.

Realisation of the Competition

The event was a tremendous success, with the University Head of Estates, Pro Vice Chancellor and Dean of AET Faculty being included as members of the judging panel. A team of three alumni were unanimously chosen winners. All members are currently employed in architecture practices across the North of England and undertook their Part 1, 2 and currently studying Part 3 at the Leeds School of Architecture. The three alumni are now working as paid consultants to PO, upon the Planning Design phase, with a submission intended for October 2016.

Gareth said: *"This project was a collaborative effort. We all got together and worked through all of the various aspects of the design, producing the drawings along the way. The inspiration behind 'The Potting Sheds' was to create a piece of functional architecture which sits harmoniously within its surroundings. After visiting the site, we felt that there was a natural spine to the site and this helped define the location of our design proposal. By positioning our design on the northern boundary we created both a visual reference from the approach to the site and a gateway to the STaLRC. Additionally, this also meant that there would be minimal disruption to the landscape. Our design creates a positive connection with the landscape and this is something which we felt was essential for those using the building."*



Competition Winners. Photo by PO

Nick commented: *"It's fantastic to be chosen as the winning team, especially when the quality of the other entries is taken into consideration. We are all extremely proud of what we have achieved in such a short space of time and are looking forward to seeing the project taken forward and constructed."*

Daniel added: *"We would like to thank the Project Office for the opportunity to enter this competition and see the project*

realised in the not too distant future. The PO is a fantastic addition to not only the architectural course at Leeds Beckett but also to the entire university. Through giving students exposure to live projects it offers an insight into professional practice and this is something which is not always easy to achieve. Finally, we would like to say how good it feels to give something back to the university now that we are approaching the conclusion of our studies at Leeds Beckett.”

After having worked together developing the design ready for Planning, the winning team were asked about how they saw the relationship between themselves and PO. The response stated, “We are enjoying the experience of working collaboratively with the project office. The relationship is difficult to define however. It feels as though it is the next progression in the student-tutor relationship. For example, at Masters it felt as though the students were given greater freedom to explore their own ideas and encouraged to have the confidence to translate these ideas into architectural solutions with far less input from tutors than what we experienced at Undergraduate. Working with the Project Office is the next progression and it feels very much that they have the confidence in us to produce an architectural solution which will perform well and that they are wanting to work alongside us rather than above us to create a piece of really good architecture. It now feels as though we are equal collaborators and this is one of the best aspects of the project. However, when deadlines come around, this may or may not shift more towards ‘employers in charge’ as it would in day-to-day architectural practice.”



Project Development Meeting. Photo by PO

The relationship the alumni describe is almost identical to that which Susan Imel espouses when explaining the concept of Collaborative Learning in Adult Education (1991). The key concepts relate to the hierarchy between facilitators and learners being eliminated and in so doing both become active participants in the educational process. In such an arrangement Imel suggests that whilst both the “*facilitators and learners are jointly responsible for establishing the environment for activity, it is the responsibility of the facilitator to take the lead.*” This is exactly the situation PO

and the winning alumni team are currently in, working together as a team continually attempting to address the paradox of continued alumni education with the realisation of live project delivery.

PO’s circadian rhythm within the paradox being set forth in this paper is captured by Brookfield (1986) who observed that one of the facilitator’s most demanding tasks is “*to assist in the development of a group culture in which participants can feel free to challenge one another and feel comfortable with being challenged. Without such an environment, Collaborative Learning cannot occur.*”

Project Office Feedback Sheet

STaLRC FEEDBACK SHEET	
Entrant Name:	Edward Shallcross
Scheme:	Landscape Chambers
Positive Aspects	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposal is affordable within the construction budget The scheme responds well to the content of the brief. Good use of sustainable technologies, and excellent straw bale detail Clear presentation 	
Areas to Develop	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project lacks a cohesive conceptual driver (other than sustainability) The panel felt that the architecture was not inspiring enough to take forward to the shortlist. You do not provide any visuals of the internal spaces. 	
Additional Comments	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The shortlisting panel was impressed with the entrants understanding of strawbale technology, which is appropriate for this competition. The lesson is that it is always good to play to your strengths. If you enter any competitions in the future you should look for a similar good fit to your interests. It would have been useful for this presentation to integrate the technology into the visuals of the scheme in some way (section / sectional perspective) so we could really get a sense of the idea insitu. The architecture, despite the technological approach, could be more effusive, so in an ideas competition you can push the boundaries of the technology. 	
Signed	
Date	12th May 2016

Example Feedback Sheet. PO

Feedback to Alumni Competitors

Architecture competitions have also long been criticised for the way it takes advantage of well meaning architects and its wastefulness of unsuccessful entries. In the educational setting this is avoided as the whole process is about learning and the PO and client respected the process by paying a honorarium to all entrants.

The final element of PO’s approach to alumni competition is the giving of detailed and individual feedback. Normal competition entrants do not expect to receive any feedback from the competition organisers about the merits of their work. However, it is not unusual for winners, runners-up and commended entries to receive some commentary on their endeavours through brief feedback. In this situation feedback has two purposes; firstly the dissemination of the competition to a wider audience through press release or magazine articles, secondly for the non-winning but placed entrants, to soften the blow of not winning.

A completely different use of feedback is required in the alumni competition where the entrants learning experience is of at least equal, if not greater importance, than the work produced. Consequently feedback for the STaLRC project was

written in detail by PO for each of the thirteen entries. As a learning exercise for alumni it was essential that feedback on their entries was diligently undertaken and useful for them in critiquing their work and developing as young professionals.

The feedback was split into three categories: Positive Aspects, Areas to Develop and Additional Comments. The writers wanted each competitor to benefit from the judges' view but also have an appraisal of their work as if PO was acting in a modified tutor / student relationship. The feedback is in the form of a formative assessment tradition, defined here as 'the process used by teachers and students to recognise and respond to student learning in order to enhance that learning, during the learning' (Cowie & Bell, 1999) consistent in schools of architecture that alumni would have been familiar with in their 5 years of formal architectural education. Continuing this into alumni education appears at odds with their fledgling, but the authors think that formative feedback could be continued in a more structured way in working life perhaps linked into an annual review system by the employers.

An example of the type of feedback provided was:

"The shortlisting panel was impressed with the entrants understanding of strawbale technology, which is appropriate for this competition. The lesson is that it is always good to play to your strengths. If you enter any competitions in the future you should look for a similar good fit to your interests. It would have been useful for this presentation to integrate the technology into the visuals of the scheme in some way (section / sectional perspective) so we could really get a sense of the idea insitu. The architecture, despite the technological approach, could be more effusive, so in an ideas competition you can push the boundaries of the technology."

Genenan and Andrea responded to receiving their feedback by writing, *"We really appreciate the time taken to provide us with this valuable feedback and take onboard everything that's was mentioned."*

Antonio also replied, *"Thanks very much for the quick feedback. Very useful as well. You were right, we didn't have enough time to produce something more in depth. We would have loved to be shortlisted but I recognised that the level of the other entries was really good."*

Future of the Competition

This paper has provided a case study in Leeds Beckett University Project Office's use of alumni competition to provide the initial design stage for the Sustainable Technology and Landscape Resource Centre to be constructed at the Headingley campus in 2017. Through

charting the competition stages and reflections of participants this paper acts as the first step in developing PO's methodology for alumni engagement through pedagogically driven design competitions.

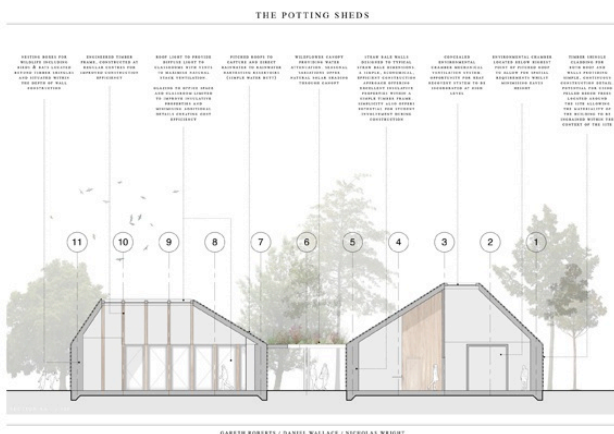
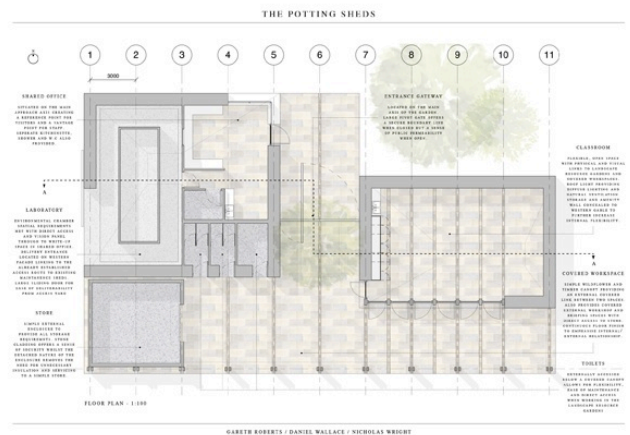
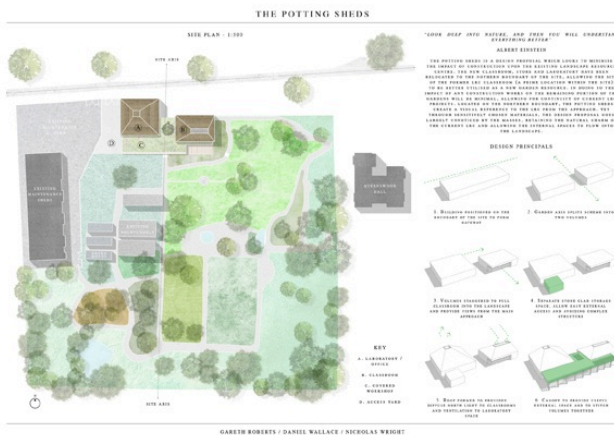
Research suggests PO is the only operative offering its alumni the opportunity to continue their architectural education post graduation through the delivery of live project competitions. In parallel PO are the only University Architecture department undertaking Contractor constructed commissions with student-designed projects for genuine external Clients with Contract values in excess of £500,000. Here in lies the key pedagogic element in PO's methodology, the paradox of simultaneously occupying academia and practice.

The STaLRC alumni competition proved a success on both sides of the paradox. In maintaining contact with its alumni PO have managed to extend standard architectural pedagogy by placing a value on the transition between education and profession. Fledgling professionals unencumbered by the specificity of ARB criteria, nor the pressures of practice, are free to expand and test their abilities within a framework of trust. The learning outcomes of participants are of equal importance to the quality of entries, thus with comprehensive feedback provided every entrant is able to use the process to further their abilities and understanding.

Moussavi's *"desire to go beyond what already exists"* is manifest in the process itself, as described in the paper, but also in the architectural innovation explicit in some of the excellent competition entries.

Through collaborative learning PO are both facilitators and learners, the duality enabling a continued development of the pedagogical tools applied whilst simultaneously providing a range of thought provoking and architecturally considered solutions for a Client with very definite requirements.

To conclude, the authors would argue the process has been very successful, and is one which will be used again with the intention of engaging an even greater number of alumni participants. The final words being those of shortlisted entrant Steven, *"I think Project Office understands the education and nurturing of young talent, and does a good job to promote it by actively demonstrating the value of architecture. We were expecting a good contest and feedback from all at Leeds because the way that Simon and Craig have set-up the conversation over recent years. Hopefully all your students got to look at the boards, and see that it is possible to have great ideas and do the drawings in just two weekends – No Excuses!"*



Winning Entry. Roberts, Wallace & Wright

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