Prue Chiles

Bureau – design + research
University of Sheffield
www.bdr.group.shef.ac.uk
www.liveprojects.org
www.sheffield.ac.uk/architecture

2002 - 2014
Bureau-design+research

2000 -2015
Prue Chiles Architects

2015 -
CE+CA - Chiles, Evans and Care Architects
www.cecastudio.co.uk

2014 –
Professor of Architectural Design Research,
Newcastle University
www.ncl.ac.uk
“What are the real possibilities for you the architect in your position in society, not as hero who is going to save society, but as worker who is engaging practices that have the possibility of opening up new ways of doing things here and there...”

David Harvey
Architects are, or at least think like to think of themselves as, liberal optimists, set with the belief of making the world a better place. The trouble is that notions of redemptive beauty or deterministic functionalism mean that those aspirations are misplaced. People are not abstractions. They do not submit to the reason of functionalism: they have emotions, lives, accidents, and politics. The space of abstraction cannot accommodate the spatiality of being – by which I mean (following Henri Lefebvre) the sociality of being.

Jeremy Till on the Architects of Park Hill

Architecture as a discipline and the University in general needs to come in line with with this state of affairs by blurring the boundary between the academy and the outside world.
My work on schools and neighbourhood design in particular have been transdisciplinary experiences, working with communities, children and other professionals to try and achieve something everyone who has been involved feels a small part of. Relationships built and a reciprocal exchange of knowledge is at the base of any successful collaboration.

A Community Plan for Parkwood Springs, a very mixed industrial area of Sheffield with a huge landfill site, ongoing and defunct industry, homes and other businesses and fishermen on the river.
Ballifield Primary School, 2004

One of the Government’s Classrooms of the Future provided a three year collaboration with children, teachers and other professional colleagues in an experiment to research and design classrooms relevant to learning in the 21st century.

Research with children
This three-story potting shed and ship wreck picnic and play space was a collaboration between the children, governors and teachers and MArch Architecture students. It was part of the student led live project programme compulsory for 3 months of their 2 year Masters.

The project took nearly three years and was a complex transdisciplinary process. After a lot of health and safety issues it was achieved with re-cycled materials. It was an example of working in and outside the academy and staff being enabled to blur their teaching, research and practice to give students both an participatory, collaborative, and practical experience.
Learning can happen more outside the classroom. These sustainable toilets were a combined project between research in the university and from the architects.
Teaching and learning are central to the form and space in schools.
Schools should be the centre of the community.
Nature and the Environment are critical to school design.
Children learn outside the classroom – and in the landscape.
Children should participate in the design and construction of schools.
Special schools should be special.
Schools play an important role in urban development.

Many of these themes important to the design of our schools are just as relevant in the building of our Universities.
Participants were recruited through an exhibition on **the potential futures of the energy system in Stocksbridge library**. 12 workshops followed, occurring every four to eight weeks, alongside more informal weekly drop-in sessions organised at a local café. The closing event was a second public exhibition, organised by the resident participants with the aid of the academic team. The aim of the workshops was to create an experimental space, where future local energy scenarios and technologies could be explored using a variety of methods. The project acts as the catalyst to bring together a diverse spectrum of local people and academics, each with their own interests and values. A member of our ‘assembled public’ took the lead in each of the projects.
The Socratic dialogue is still the way we debate big questions and open ended enquiry at university
The present dramatic changes of economic, social, cultural and technological structures and processes and their implications for knowledge production present serious challenges for universities...most socially and economically relevant knowledge is currently conveyed outside the university.  
(Scharmer and Kaufer 2000 P185)

The concept of university historically has:

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<td>(Practice as strategic co-creation with companies, consortia, venture capitalists, business incubators.)</td>
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|   | What is next?                   |          |          |
Typical historic college at Oxford, an inward looking elitist scholar’s environment
New additions to Magdalen College at Oxford library and archives, high quality, subtle contemporary additions to enhance the luxury and quiet contemplative scholarship (Wright and Wright Architects 2017 winner of the US Architecture prize for Heritage)
Built in 1776 The Radcliffe Observatory is an great example of the specificity of the building to the production of knowledge - for the age of exploration in the South Seas and astronomical observation as a prerequisite for marine navigation. Hornsby persuaded the trustees of Dr John Radcliffe's estate to provide the funds and was appointed as the first Observer, a post which he occupied until his death in 1810. It was also used for meterological experiments - hence the sculptures of the 8 Greek gods of the winds – Boreas, Kaikaias, Apeliothes, Euros, Notos, Lipos and Zephyros.

The observatory closed in 1936, going to South Africa for clearer skies. It is used by the college faculty as a common room.
Blavatnik School of Government, Oxford University
Herzog de Meuron Architects 2016
Vast donations from overseas patrons fund statement buildings like this. They form ‘statement’ buildings, but are un-related to their discipline or the city.
Arne Jacobsen’s St Catherine’s College 1962
Fine modernist steel, concrete and glass structures but in a traditional collegiate form. - The dining room though is wonderfully symbolic of the light of knowledge created through shared eating and discussion with the floating roof and clerestory giving the space an ethereal feel.
The Sultan Nazrin Shah Centre, Oxford
Lecture theatre, seminar and dance space for Worcester College, is exquisitely detailed and also enhances the urban form of the whole of this part of the college. All higher education institutions should be able to enhance peoples lives with Architecture of this quality.
The spatial and light qualities are exceptional and the specially made furniture is beautifully ergonomic and comfortable made from fine hard woods.
Jefferson’s University of Virginia 1770’s

Students and professors live cheek by jowl in curvaceous landscaped gardens so they can walk and talk. The gardens and residences are dominated by the classical dome of learning.
The University today is a very different, outward looking institution

University of Lima
by Grafton Architects giving the Specialist Engineering University in Peru a higher more imposing and “a distinctive vertical campus structure”
Energy and Technology Building, University of Bergen,
- ‘state of the art’ science centres are proliferating on virtually every campus
Will Alsop’s Blizard building, Medical faculty, Queen Mary’s, London
2005

Modelling molecules making science space fun and about human interaction
What constitutes a civic or porous University’s engagement with civil society?

We need, presumably, to start with a much stronger articulation of what a “good” society needs, beyond a productive economy.

“We need to clarify the outcomes we are striving for – fairness, social justice, civility and tolerance, health and wellbeing, lifelong learning perhaps – and why we believe human and environmental flourishing matters. This goes beyond what is sometimes a rather mealy-mouthed framing of “grand challenges”. These are more than challenges – this is about taking a strong moral stance about the kind of world we want to help create, based on a deep understanding of the forces which shape our collective futures. Of course, this makes sound business sense too. A thriving civil society and a thriving economy should go hand in hand.”

From Wonkhe - [Higher education: policy, people and politics](https://wonkhe.com/)
A blog and think tank about UK higher education policy, people and politics: latest analysis, research, comment, debate + university jobs and recruitment.
My first exploration was being part of an RIBA publication from 2008 building on the unprecedented expansion of higher education institutions, and the immense physical impact that they are having on the urban environment. It then speculates on the future of Universities with What if scenarios looking at many key issues of sustainability, digital futures, the changing nature of libraries and the responsibility of Universities in their cities.
1.
A University at the Centre of a City

At the centre of the City
Part of the city fabric
Embedded in all the institutions of the city
Contains ‘embassies’ of different countries
Linked and networked
An open door to the city - exhibiting knowledge exchange
The porous university
The Roy and Diana Vagelos Education Centre
Columbia University  NYC

Transparent and open to the city community - or is it?
West Campus Union, Durham, North Carolina by Grimshaw’s – ‘a glazed social hub in historic city centre’

Allowing the university to dominate the area or a genuine attempt to open up the university
2. Developing a new Campus University or the University as a new city district or town.

A super campus
With other commercial buildings, businesses, innovation hubs, companies, leisure and facilities
neighbourhoods and homes
Specialist
The Vienna University of Economics and Business is the new architectural landmark next to the Prater in Vienna, forms a new super campus. There's space here for 25,000 students and 1,500 employees, the building cost EUR 492 million and took 41 months to complete:
Lots of attention paid to the external public space, landscaping and routes through the buildings. Buildings are deliberately jostling for position in their spikey and shiny modernity!
Zaha Hadid’s library and learning centre is at the centre of the University, no books are visible.
The campus includes a horse and cart race track and running track, sophisticated landscape and sustainable urban drainage and sustainable living residential buildings.
3. A virtual and distance learning University

Nimble
Moveable - and may do just that – learning on trains, planes and automobiles
Global/digital
More Affordable
Open University
Open source ......
Mooocks ......
A radical plan for a completely new type of university embedded in the post-industrial community and using the old industrial rail tracks to move and connect students and learning.
The Potteries Thinkbelt a radical narrative for a future university
Agit-Prop Trains travelled the railways of Russia including Siberia and the Ukraine in an attempt to inculcate the values and programme of the new revolutionary government to scattered and isolated workers. They were brightly painted and carried on board a printing press, government complaint office, printed political leaflets and pamphlets, library books, and a mobile cinema. Launched in August 1918, agit-trains — and their close counterparts, the urban agit-streetcar (Russian: агиттрамвай) and the aquatic agit-boat (Russian: агитпараход) — continued in limited use throughout the 1920s. The agit-train concept was revived during World War Two as a mechanism for the direct spread of information during a time when ordinary means of communication and government control structures between the centre and the periphery had faltered. They were however a way of experiencing culture and science and were a kind of university on wheels.
A one hour workshop to design a 4.00 University

The **Workshop task** is to think ‘in a designerly way’ about the physical manifestation of a 4.00 University (30 minutes)

1. The ideas you think are important to conceptualise a 4.00 University ie
   Do we have disciplinary areas at all? What is a library in the 21st century
   What new **spaces** are needed...... (10 minutes)

2. What spaces or places are needed for these ideas – and what is their **function**
   We have ‘located’ the university for your (but it could be elsewhere) (10 minutes)

3. Do you have any ideas about their **form** or what they should **feel** like (10 minutes)

4. Feedback your university 4.00 map (3 x 10 minutes)