

Contents

Introduction	4
Themes	6
Project	12
History	16
Place	20
Precedent study	24
Literature, film and references for precedent study	28
Contacts	31

Introduction

This semester the studio will continue to explore the 'normative' in architecture and the location for our investigations will be the neighbourhood of Somers Town in central London.

The emphasis of this work will be structured around the design of a new primary school replacing an existing one. This work needs to be located within a wider area and, in the first instance, a collectively produced framework for Somers Town should be made.

The project you will be developing is a real one, as there is an urgent need to build a new school on this site. Your work and that of the studio should be seen as a form of research that will assist in the re-development of this neighbourhood and an investigation of feasibility that will potentially be useful for the future development of the school.

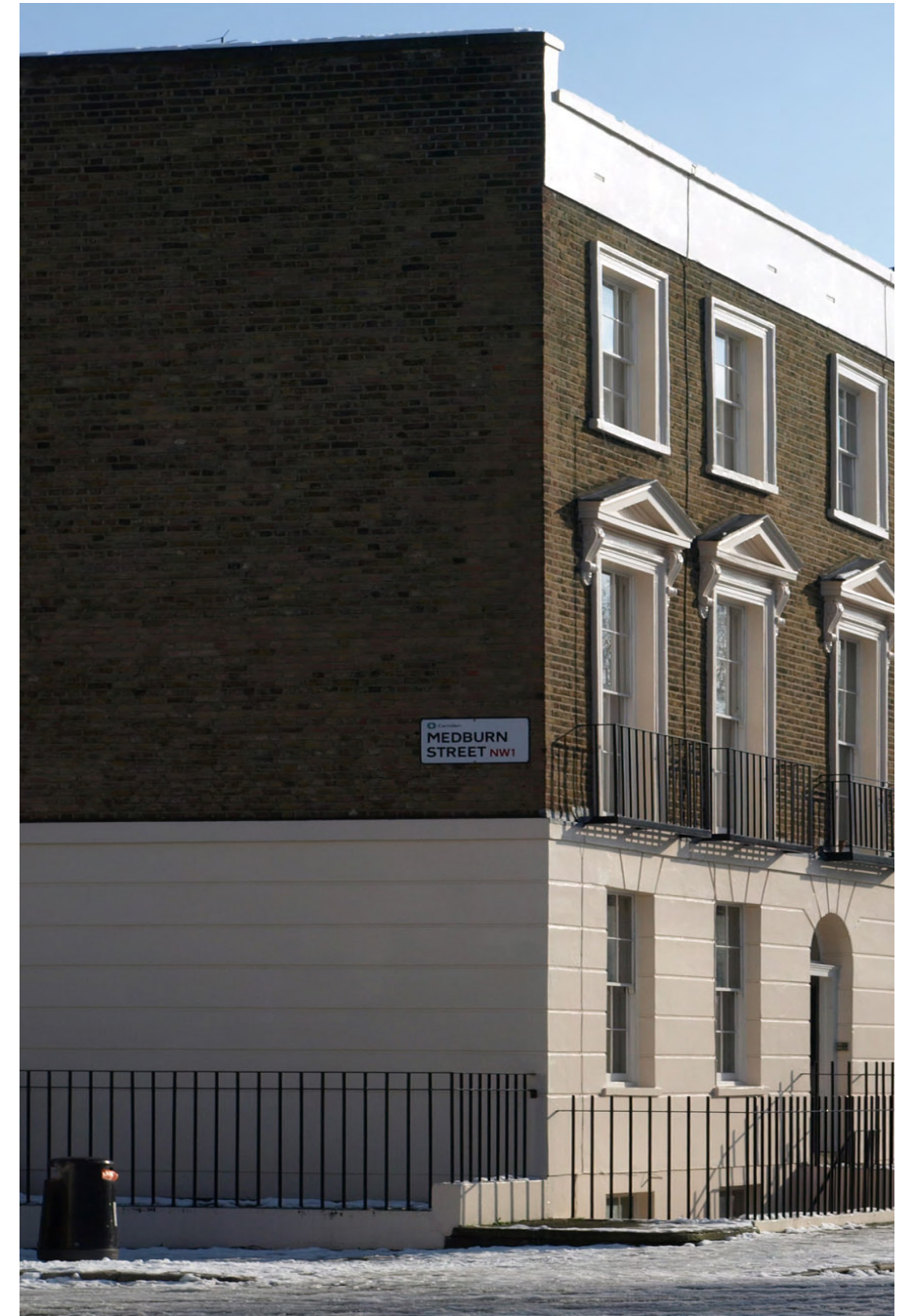
The studio will work closely with representatives of the school and we will also continue our fruitful collaboration with Design for London. Throughout the semester the studio will be supported by a lecture programme and by the contribution of experts in the field of our investigations.

Themes

Two themes will run in parallel as a way of organising and providing discipline to the projects. We will address the notion of 'type' in architecture and consider issues relating to 'sustainability'.



Aerial photograph, Somers Town (highlighted)



View of Charrington Street

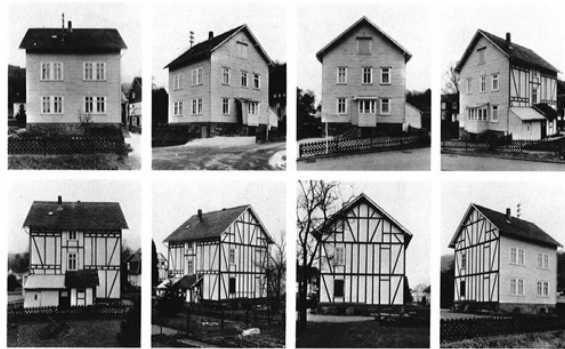


Type

We are interested in addressing and reviewing the possibilities that a typological investigation might offer in architecture, an issue that has in the past been given a considerable amount of attention by architectural thinkers and critical theorists both through theoretical investigations, as well as in the form of architectural/building proposals.

This semester we will develop and add to this body of knowledge. We subscribe to the view that buildings can be classified and categorised in terms of type and are interested in questioning what the intrinsic characteristics of a school as a type might be.

In the first weeks of the semester Irina Davidovici will give a lecture that will assist in providing a context in which to understand this theme and offer a definition by investigating the origin and meaning of the word 'type'.



278
Hilnhütter Straße 62, Dahlbruch, 1971.



279
Hauptstraße 3, Birken, 1971.



276
Abendröthe 3, Birlenbach, 1972.



277
Schloßblick 17, Kaan-Marienborn, 1962, 1971.

Sustainability

The second theme we will be addressing concerns the finding of a suitable definition of 'sustainability'. This is a term that is frequently used in contemporary architecture, but it is our contention that it is inadequately addressed and somewhat misused. There is a general acceptance that it is necessary for architects to consider the issue, but we should do so in a way that goes beyond the merely tokenistic provision of a 'green' veneer for projects. We would like to approach this issue in a much broader sense, starting by asking how a school can be sustainable as part of a community, what part it may play in its wider social setting.

We should also attend to the question and issues surrounding the need to demolish the existing school building. Is it responsible to cancel out the embodied energy that exists in this structure? Can a case be made for demolition? Assuming that it can, we would like you to give careful consideration to the form of construction that is employed in your new school proposal. How is the building heated and insulated? We would like you to consider the relationship between the capital cost of building a new school and the long term running costs of its future use.

Our hope is that you will formulate your own position in relation to these issues. We are not expecting you to design a school that looks 'green', displaying its environmental worthiness, but rather a careful and thorough piece of architecture. We will support and help you navigate your way through this challenging set of issues, and Stephen Bates will give a paper addressing this theme.

Project

A school

A school is a building we all have some experience of, as we spent a large part of the first years of our lives in one. The particular character of the school you attended would have created a lasting impression and even, at least in part, made you the person you are now. These memories should remind you of the responsibility that lies at the heart of this project and the architectural possibilities we are inviting you to explore.

When looking at the photographs of the existing schools, or in fact any school, one is struck by the sense of personalisation that is abundantly displayed. This leads to an understanding that, as architects, our responsibility in designing a school lies primarily in making a very carefully arranged background. We need to be accurate in judging the size and special character of a room, the position and detailing of its doors, the size of a window and its height in relation to the inside and outside. What should a room feel like? A school is comprised of many rooms with different functions. What should their relationship to one another be like?

When you look at the photographs of this school you should be reminded that it is not so necessary to make colourful interiors, because the pupils and teachers provide colour with the objects they bring into a classroom. We should also remember that teaching methods are constantly changing and that the technology that supports teaching evolves, too. Care needs to be taken in ensuring that the infrastructure of the school is capable of accommodating change. It is however, interesting to observe that some of the best schools in London are over 150 years old and their success lies in the way that they are spatially generous and flexible. They are simply well organised rooms. A modernist attitude to flexibility has proved, at least in part, to be a failure as it proposed a form of flexibility in classrooms that requires intervention on the part of the users of that room, such as the need to move screens or the employment of mechanical technology that requires constant servicing. The existing school is to some extent an example of the failure of this programme.

When you are designing a new school, we would encourage you to imagine the sound of walking along a corridor, or even the sound of twenty children doing this. How will the school smell? What will spaces be like in the winter and summer? What is the school's relationship to its neighbourhood, considering that in London there is an attitude to security that does not exist in Switzerland? How will the school function as a school, and at other times as a community resource? Above all else, when proposing a school building, it is important to draw upon



your memory of being in primary school and to work consciously with atmosphere and feeling before you employ technique and procedure.



Interior, Edith Neville school

Programme

Basic teaching area

6 number classrooms	63m2
2 number classrooms	56m2
3 number shared areas	28m2
3 number small meeting rooms	9m2
3 number group rooms	49m2
3 number foodbase (with cooker) area	4m2

Learning resource areas

Specialist practice resource (science lab/ art)	56m2
Library	38m2

Storage

4m2 per classroom and central storage of at least 2x6m2	48m2
Cloaks and bags storage @ 4m2 per class	36m2
Physical education equipment (accessible from outside)	10% hall area
Storage for dining chairs and tables	10m2
Records	
Maintenance and cleaning equipment	10m2
Community use store	

Halls

For 262 pupils and sport	230m2
Medical inspection room	50m2

Staff facilities

Head teacher office	10m2
Meeting room	10m2
2 number SMT offices	10m2

Staff room (workstation, kitchen, break time)	35m2
Administration office	10m2
Supplementary site area for non school functions	
Creche and family learning	100m2
Parents room	20m2
Community entrance space and store	10m2
Kitchen	55m2
Small kitchen	10m2
Toilets (including nursery washroom, staff shower room and toilets)	60m2
Circulation	20-25% of total net area
Reception area	5% of total net area
Plant	2% of net area



Aerial view of existing school and site (highlighted)

History

Somers Town is named after the first Baron Somers of Evesham who owned the land, which in the 18th century was still largely dominated by farming. Despite being comparatively close to central London, the area never developed according to what its location might suggest. The construction of Euston Road in the mid-18th century had a lasting impact by separating the area from fashionable Bloomsbury. Three railway termini – Euston, Kings Cross and St Pancras – as well as the Somers Town railway and canal goods depot, all built during the 19th century, shaped the area to an extent which can still be experienced today. The area attracted a huge number of workers, among them many refugees from the French revolution. Despite initial ambitious housing experiments by Jacob Leroux, who leased the area from the Somers family in the late 18th century, the area soon became overcrowded and by the middle of the century largely comprised poor housing (see Charles Booth's map of London poverty. p.19).

As early as 1840 attempts were made to relieve the poor housing conditions, with cottage housing and blocks of flats. By around 1900 conditions had become so notorious that the Saint Pancras Borough Council decided to take action. The London County Council first got involved in the area before the Great War, completing the Churchway Estate to relieve overcrowding.

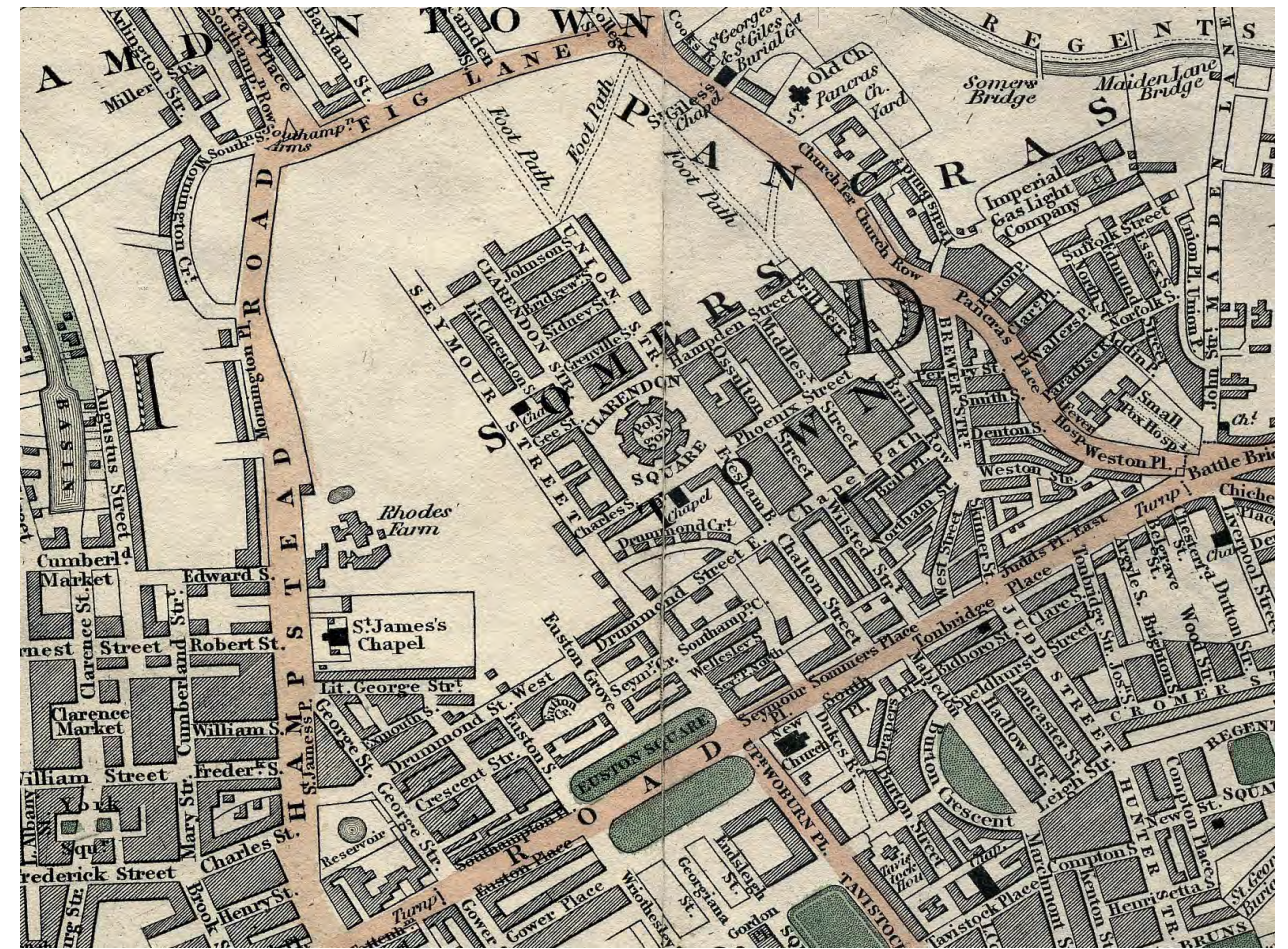
After the First World War the situation had worsened and a number of other initiatives were proposed: Reverend Basil Jellicoe, then heading the Magdalen Colleges mission in Osnaburgh Street, founded the Saint Pancras Home Improvement Society (which later was to become the Saint Pancras Housing Association) in 1924. Initially focussing on community activities, its endeavours led to a new building in Doric Way as early as 1926.

The LCC was approached by the Ministry of Health in 1924 to comment on St Pancras Borough Council's plans for the redevelopment of the Wolcot Estate, a small area to the north of the site. Despite being deemed as far too limited in scope, the project went ahead. The LCC saw the need for a much more comprehensive approach for redeveloping a far wider area. After negotiations with the LMS railway company, the main landowner, the LCC was able to acquire the strip of land between Chalton Street and Ossulston Street, bounded by Weir's Passage to the south and Hampden Road to the north.



Baron Somers of Evesham, engraving

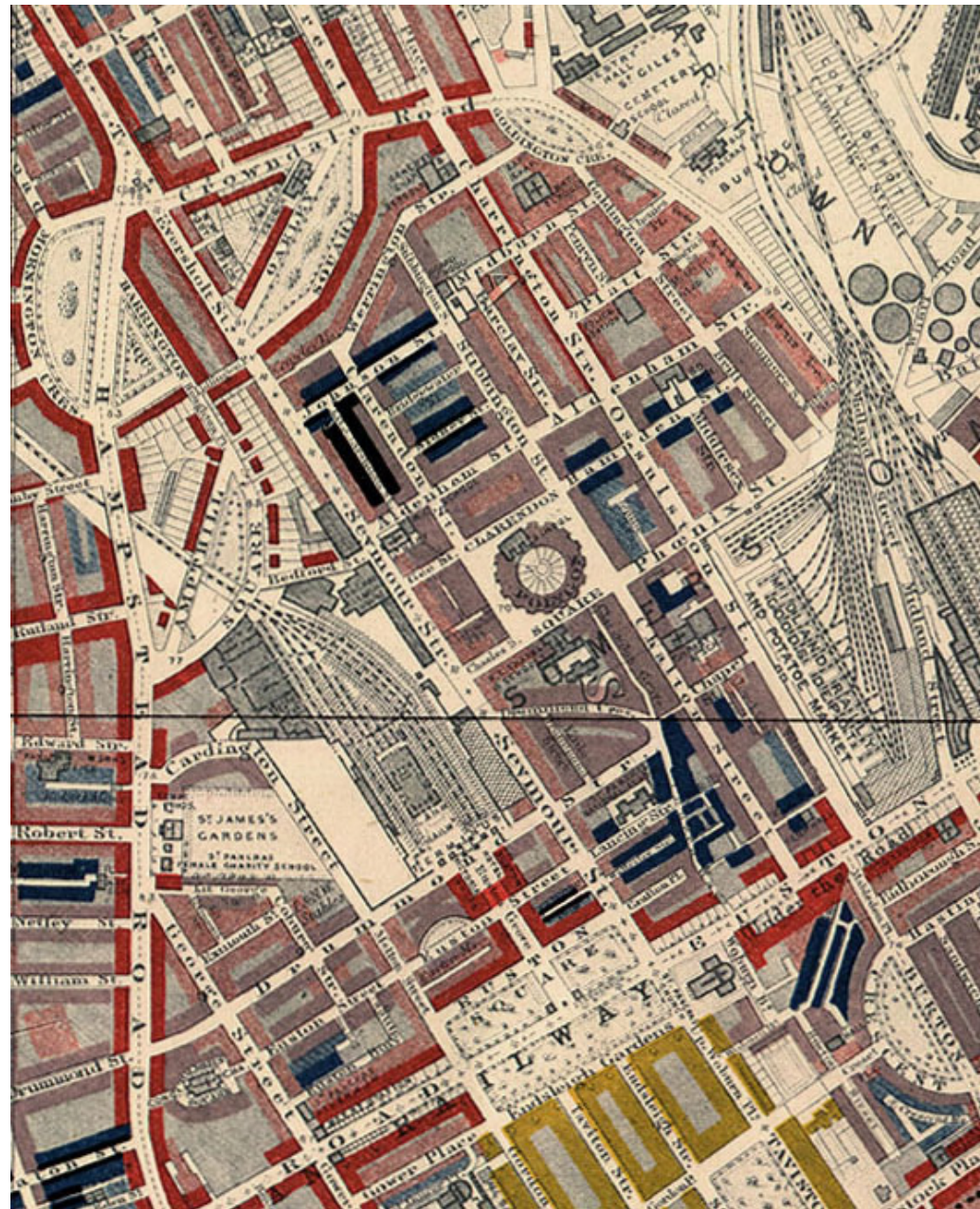
Today Somers Town is an area of central London that operates within a series of contradictions. As a neighbourhood, it is not known by name by most Londoners, but houses the British Library, an institution of national significance. It sits between three of London's significant railway terminals but the connection it affords between them is poor. It is an area with some arguably fine examples of collective housing, but also has high levels of social dependency and poverty.



Cruchley Plan of London, 1827

Place

- Lowest class. Vicious, semi-criminal.
- Very poor, casual. Chronic want.
- Poor. 18s. to 21s. a week for a moderate family.
- Mixed. Some comfortable, others poor.
- Fairly comfortable. Good ordinary earnings.
- Middle-class. Well-to-do.
- Upper-middle and Upper classes. Wealthy.



Charles Booth's map of London poverty, 1889



Cranleigh Street, Somers Town



Courtyard view of Ossulton Street Estate, Somers Town



Aldenham Street, Somers Town



Precedent Study

To assist in developing a meaningful understanding of the programme, its functional requirements and architectural issues, the beginning of the semester will be devoted to the study of a number of exemplary schools in Switzerland. This is because, in our opinion, they are amongst the best contemporary examples we can think of. Your work will be carried out in pairs. You will be expected to prepare a research document (A4 report) that analyses one school in detail. It is important that your work is structured around these to enable a meaningful comparison to be made between one study and another:

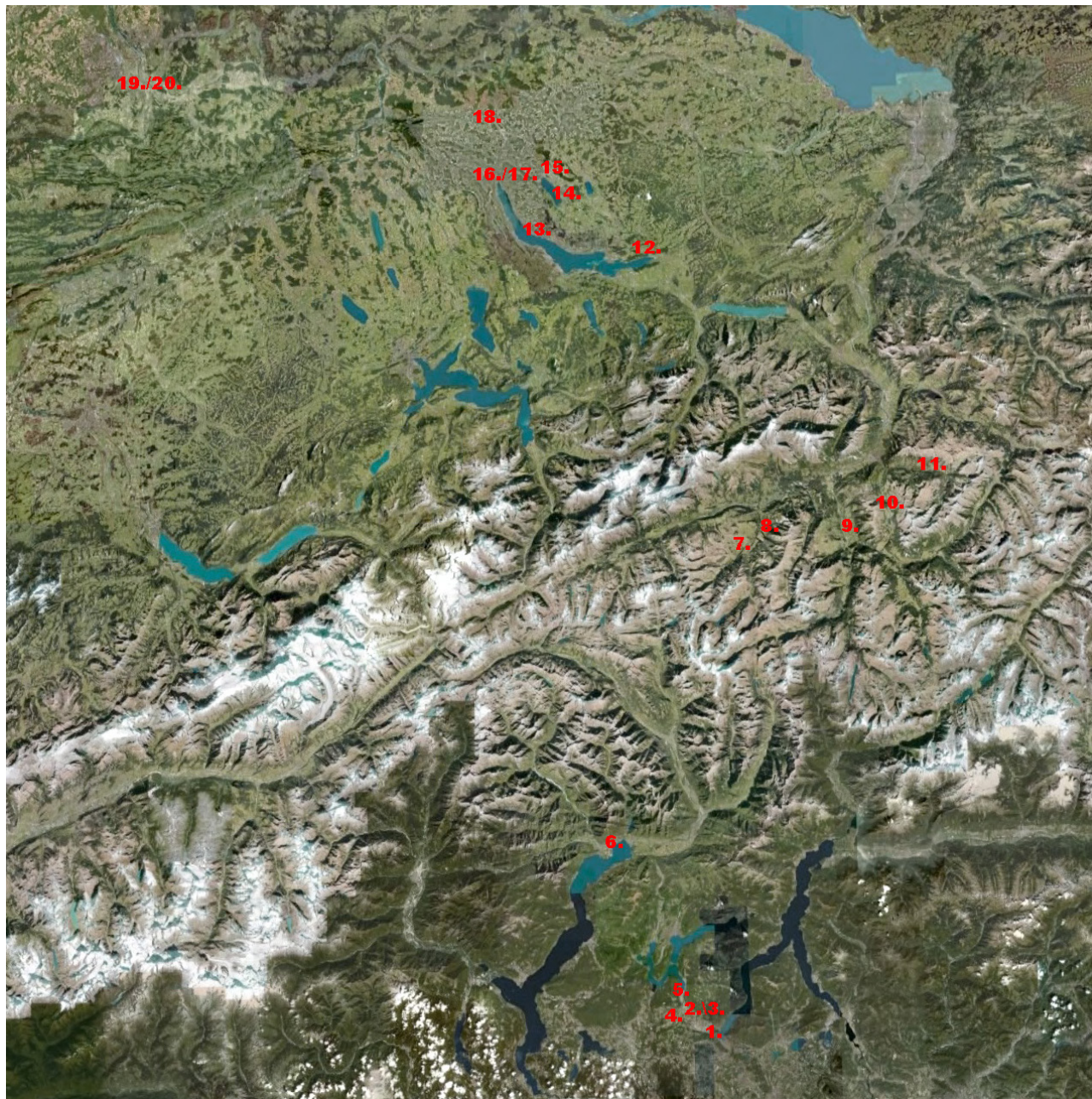
- the building and the way it relates to its place
- the programmatic and planned organisation of the school
 - considering the relationship of private and public space, inside and outside
- construction
- environmental strategy

You will be required to produce drawings (plans, sections and elevations) to an agreed and recognised scale within a precisely determined convention. This is to ensure that the survey drawings you make can be accurately compared with those made by other groups. Photographs will also need to be made to carefully record the formal architectural characteristics of the building. We are also interested in a photographic record of the act of inhabitation and the manner in which transformation occurs.

Many of the architectural offices that have designed the projects we have selected could in theory (respectfully) be contacted. It would be interesting to seek comments on the ideas that were explored in individual buildings. It might also be possible to obtain copies of their drawings. Furthermore, it would be great if interviews with the authors of the projects were conducted, recorded and transcribed. This exercise would be all the more interesting if the same questions were posed to all practices or individuals, so as to allow information to be compared meaningfully.



Chalton Street, Somers Town



School buildings

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scuola Materna Chiasso
Flora Ruchat-Roncati, Antonio Antorini,
Francesco Pozzi, 1964 2. Scuola Materna Balerna
Ivano Gianola, 1974 3. Scuola Morbio Inferiore
Mario Botta, 1977 4. Scuola Elementare Stabio
Tita Carloni, 1974 5. Scuola Materna Riva San Vitale
Aurelio Galfetti, Flora Ruchat-Roncati
Ivo Truempy, 1972 6. Scuola Elementare Locarno
Livio Vacchini, 1978 7. Schule in Vella
Bearth Deplazes, 1998 8. Schulhaus Duvin
Gion A. Caminada, 1995 9. Schulhaus Paspels
Valerio Olgiati, 1998 10. Schulhaus Churwalden
Peter Zumthor, 1982 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Schulhaus St. Peter
Conradin Clavuot, 1995 12. Oberstufenschulzentrum Eschenbach
Christian Kerez, 2003 13. Schule Obermeilen
Von Ballmoos Krucker, 2007 14. Kantonsschule Wil
Stauer Hasler, 2008 15. Schulhaus in der Hoeh Volketswil
Horisberger Wagen Architekten 16. Schulzentrum im Birch
Peter Markii, 2004 17. Schulhaus Mattenhof Zurich
B.E.R.G. Architekten, 2004? 18. Grundschule Linden Niederhasli
Buenzli & Courvoisier 19. Volta Schulhaus Basel
Miller & Maranta 20. Ueberbauung Dreirosen- Klybeck Basel
Morger & Degelo, 1996 |
|--|--|

Programme Project work

19 February	Studio presentation	Assignments
20 February	First meeting: introductions and studio organisation	Precedent study
26-27 February	Students school visits in Switzerland	Brief analysis
5-9 March	Students' visit to London	Site visit (Somers Town school visit, lecture, precedent visit, school symposium).
12-13 March	Workshop on Somers Town	Presentation of work on precedent study
19-20 March	School closed on 19 March	
25-27 March	Tutorials	
2-3 April	Crits pin-up with Stephen Bates, Mark Brearley	Sketch scheme

16-17 April	Easter break	Assignments
23-24 April	Tutorials	
29-30 April	Tutorials	Internal space study
7-8 May	Tutorials	
14-15 May	Tutorials	Draft of final presentation
21-22 May	Tutorials	
25-26 May	Final review with invited critics	material to be confirmed

Literature

Complexity and Contradiction
Venturi, MOMA 1966/1977

The Architecture of the City
Aldo Rossi, MIT Press 1982

Climate Register
Peter Salter, Architectural Association, London 1994

As Found – The discovery of the ordinary.
Claude Lichtenstein and Thomas Schreggenberger (eds), Lars Müller, 2001

A Guide to the Architecture of London
Edward Jones & Christopher Woodward, Weidenfeld & Nicholson 1983

Papers 2
Jonathan Sergison and Stephen Bates, 2007

Words and Buildings
Adrian Forty, Thames and Hudson, London, 2000

London: the biography
Peter Ackroyd, Chatto and Windus 2000

Richard Wentworth / Eugene Atget
The Photographer's Gallery 2001

Without and within
Mark Pimlott, episode publishers 2008

Register, commentaries
Von Ballmoos Krucker architekten, gta Verlag 2007

The other tradition of modern architecture: The uncompleted project
Colin St John Wilson, Black Dog Publishing 2007

London, the unique city
Sten Eiler Rasmussen, 1982

The charged void
Alison and Peter Smithson, Monacelli Press, 2005

Film

London
Patrick Keiller, 1994

Somers Town
Shane Meadows, 2008

and references for precedent studies

Valentin Bearth & Andrea Deplazes, Räumlinge, Quart Verlag, Luzern
1999: p.32-43

'Expressive Halle und Ateliers. Erweiterung Schulhaus Mattenhof
Zürich Schwamwendingen von B.E.R.G. Architekten, Zürich', in Schu-
len et cetera, werk, bauen + wohnen, no.3 2004: p. 29-33

'Vor Anker im Schweizer Mittelland. Primarschulhaus Linden in Nied-
erhasli von Bünzi & Courvoisier, Zürich, in Schulen et cetera, werk,
bauen + wohnen, no.3 2004: p. 40-45

'Schulhaus Duvin, 1995', in Bettina Schlorhauser (ed), Cul zuffel e
l'aura dado. Gion A. Caminada, Quart Verlag, Luzern 2005: p 74-81

'New classrooms for Hallfied School, London 2001-2005', in Aurora
Fernández Per (ed.), As built. Caruso St John Architects, a+t edi-
ciones 2005: p. 124-149

'Sphären der Halböffentlichkeit. Schulhaus In der Höh in Volketswil
von Gafner & Horisberger Architekten, Zürich', in Schulen et cetera,
werk, bauen + wohnen, no.3 2004: p. 34-39

'Peter Märkli, Scool Complex Im Birch, Oerlikon, Zürich, Switzerland
2004', in Peter Märkli. Craft of Architecture, a+u Architecture and Ur-
banism, 08:01, no. 448 p.46-55

'Überbauung Dreirosen-Klybeck', in Morger & Degelo Architekten,
Verlag Niggli AG, Zürich 2000: p.46-57

Valerio Olgiati, Paspels, Edition Dino Simonett, Zurich 1998

Staufer & Hasler Architekten, Kantonsschule Wil – ein Holzbauwerk,
Verlag Niggli AG, Sulgen/Zurich 2004

'044 Schule Obermeilen', in Von Ballmoos Krucker architekten Regis-
ter, Kommentare, gta Verlag 2007

Contacts

Professor

Jonathan Sergison

Practice website

www.sergisonbates.co.uk

Assistants

Joao Machado

joao.machado@arch.unisi.ch

t +41 (0)58 666 5761

m +41 (0)76 462 12 98

Georg Nickisch

georgnickisch@flims.ch

t +41 (0)58 666 5761

m +41 (0)76 432 35 31

Marina Aldrovandi

marinaaldrovandi@sergisonbates.co.uk

t +44 (0)20 7255 1564

Office location

Palazzo Canaveé C 3.75

Studio location

Palazzo Canaveé 3rd floor