Reflections 17
Content

Preface by Anneleen Van der Veken 5
Introduction by Johan Verbeke 9

Contributions by Tutors
Halina Dunin-Woyseth & Fredrik Nilsson: Research as a driving force for change: on triadic practice in architecture 15
Ranulph Glanville & Michael Hohl: Research Training Sessions - Notes on the reflection workshop 29
Ömer Akin: [Research by [Design] Research] 37
Gerard de Zeew: Frames and trans-frames 49
Rolf Hughes: An Architect’s Testimony 55

Contributions by Participants
Participants of ‘RTS 2011’
Catherine Mengé: The Fragile Genius Loci 65
Geert Peymen: Ritual Design: ’Space without a name’ 77
Gisèle Gantois: The architect-heritage practitioner as a storyteller 89
Nina Taghavi: Using Narrative to Explore the Play of Conceptual Possibilities in Architecture 115

Participants of ‘RTS 2012’
Anita Nevens: Deep inside the palace of Atman 143
Mariken Dumon: Movement and motion. Research on blown glass in craft, design and the arts. 155

Participants of previous Research Training Sessions
Marc Godts: By Design For Design XYZ 165
Harold Fallon: Metarbitrariness? extracts 197
Kris Scheerlinck: Implicit Distances 221

Colophon 232
Preface

Dear reader,

A new Reflections has been prepared for you. More new than ever. Last year has had quite an impact on Sint-Lucas School of Architecture. We have become the Faculty of Architecture of the KU Leuven and we share a Research Department of Architecture with the Architectural Engineers. Together we strive to take a leading position in architectural research.

Thanks to a couple of our researchers, each of the articles in this Reflections has been reviewed by two peers. This gave the opportunity to the young researchers to improve the quality of their writings and to get used to the peer-review system. This resulted, again, in a Reflections with nice results from the Research Training Sessions.

The article of Halina Dunin-Woyseth and Fredrik Nilsson is really worth reading, as it shows how our education and research evolved during the years, but in the meantime it still bears the hallmark of Sint-Lucas. We are proud of our doctoral alumni: Marcelo Blasco, Nel Janssens, Hilde Bouchez, Arnaud Hendrickx, Jo Van Den Berghe, Harold Fallon, Laurens Luyten, Thierry Lagrange, Caroline Voet and Erik Van Daele. Thank you, you are all doing great efforts to enhance the role of architectural research!

Enjoy reading!

dr. Anneleen Van der Veken
Research Coordinator
introduction
Innovating Research Climate

In Flanders, as we all know, the discipline of architecture, amongst others, is now in the process of being integrated into the universities. For arts, music and design we hope this will also happen in the near future. This process is having a lot of impact on these disciplines, and their research programs are being developed in a more explicit and structured way than in the past. But the process is also introducing interesting questions.

First of all, these developments are taking place not only in Flanders, but in fact all over Europe. Artistic research and research by design are currently in the spotlights. Universities and other institutions of higher education are endeavoring to establish research groups, as it is well known that breakthroughs in any given discipline are generated not by individuals but by research programs. Moreover, even larger entities are being formed, such as the University of the Arts London, Altoo University in Helsinki and our own LUCA School of Arts. This is an important learning process involving trial and error, and it will require a lot of time and ongoing changes and adaptations.

On the other hand, these disciplines have already been developing specific qualities in their activities in the past. For a long time already, they have been interacting with the social and cultural environment and discourse. Another important aspect is that these disciplines require high levels of competence in making, doing and performing. The schools have been sandboxes of creativity, reflection and inspiration. They have the top architects, artists, designers and musicians amongst their staff. The organizational structures have so far been extremely flexible, and this should be seen as a quality to be fostered.

Researchers report that the fact of becoming (more) active in research is changing their teaching in the design and art studios. They are focusing more and more on knowledge processes.

The disciplines of art, music, architecture and design have a very different character than the analytical disciplines to understand reality. Art, music, architecture and design are future oriented, striving to develop and describe future realities or to highlight yet unknown aspects and experiences of our current society. Reflection-in-action\(^1\) is a key competence. They are based on empathic interpretations of our experiences of reality. They explore meaning and judgment. By nature, they are trans-cultural and trans-disciplinary.

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In all of these developments, and in order to ensure excellence, international networks are of crucial importance. They are the perfect forum for discussing, evaluating and further developing research; they also provide for greater exposure and the establishment of reputation. The Sint-Lucas School of Architecture recently received special recognition for the quality of its long-standing international activities.

The disciplines are currently also involved in discussions concerning quality of research output (which is crucial!), but this is, in my opinion, currently too much linked to the existing types of quantification (the disciplines are just not yet ready for that) and financing (like everyone else, we need more). You will understand that this is currently not the best for these disciplines, with emerging explorative research endeavours that need to be given the chance to first grow and develop.

Practice has been and still is the core business of the art and architecture schools. With the abundance of part-time staff, there has been continuous structural interaction with industry and the cultural field. Many research projects have easily incorporated industrial and/or cultural partnerships. In reference to the article in Knack (16th May 2012), “Een doctoraat moet relevanter worden”, it is clear that, whereas in other disciplines this collaboration needs to be stimulated, for art, music, architecture and design, this collaboration has long been a fact.

On the international scene, we see our international partner RMIT, in Melbourne, Australia, which uses the term creative practice research, and indeed a large part of this research is based on practice and the results are impacting positively on the field. We are also structurally connected to the schools in Gothenburg, Sweden and many others. There is great interest in what we are doing, and many of the visiting staff are connecting to our endeavours. Partnerships for the arts and music have also been established. It will be great working together with KU Leuven and extending these collaborations into joint research programs and degrees.

It seems that research developments are impacting positively on the synergy and interaction between the disciplines of art, music, architecture and design. Collaborations and mutual learning demonstrate that it will be important to stress the common characteristics of these disciplines: the focus on making, the emphasis on exploring aspects of reality in a non-analytical way, the importance of experiencing, making, doing and performing as part of the research process,... The act of imagining new things, new experiences, new performances, new perspectives is key to these fields. The object of their study is not that which is today, but rather that which can be imaged and projected in the future.

Hence we are launching here the idea of creating the term ‘Delta Sciences’ to refer to the group of disciplines which incorporate the above mentioned key characteristics.

I would like to end this contribution by referring to Søren Kjørup, who recently in the Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts (2010) made a plea for plurality in the concepts and understanding of what artistic research can be and how it should be conducted. He argued that this is the only way of doing justice to what is actually going on in the artistic world and of avoiding the imposition of restrictions for purely formalistic reasons. He made it clear that any attempt to squeeze artistic research into a single format based on a strict definition of ‘the scientific method’ or on a single narrow concept of research will fail.

To conclude, I’m sure the current developments where the mentioned disciplines learn from practice and established fields, also incorporate opportunities for innovating other disciplines. As a policy it may be valuable to actively stimulate this mutual learning. I am sure that the integration of artistic research and research by design into the university structures will further contribute to a vibrant environment looking for excellence in research! Only in the future will it become clear what the impact of the development of artistic research and research by design will be on the disciplines themselves, as well as on the other, long established research disciplines. There is a huge potential for mutual benefit, and we are happy to incorporate all the possibilities and opportunities into our endeavours. We hope the benefits will flow in both directions.

Johan Verbeke

contributions
tutors
Our engagement in research education at Sint-Lucas School of Architecture began in 2006, and, to be honest, our first encounter with the research culture at the school was not an entirely easy one (see Dunin-Woyseth and Nilsson 2006). Since then, we have had the opportunity to follow the emergence of a very interesting environment and culture of research (Dunin-Woyseth and Nilsson 2011), which, crucially, also includes teaching and professional practice. Julia Williams Robinson has written that architecture is “an emerging discipline that involves professional practice, research, and teaching.” She continues, “The character and effects of its products—disciplinary knowledge, the forms of disciplinary practices, architectural artifacts—are the responsibility of those within the field. Academics, researchers, and professional practitioners are thus jointly responsible to society and each other” (Robinson 2001, 62). While closely following the emergence of such a scholarly culture, we have also observed how these different practices have become integrated into each other, to become one and the same. Emerging ever more quickly and deeply, this culture has begun to make its mark at Sint-Lucas. In 2012, seven teachers at the school of architecture were awarded the degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD). They are: Laurens Luyten, Nel Janssens, Arnaud Hendrickx, Thierry Lagrange, Jo Van Den Berghe, Harold Fallon, and Hilde Bouchez (Luyten 2012; Janssens 2012; Hendrickx 2012; Lagrange 2012; Van Den Berghe 2012; Fallon 2012; Bouchez 2012). Although they graduated from three different academic institutions—KU Leuven in Belgium, RMIT in Australia, and Chalmers University of Technology in Sweden—we witnessed their doctoral paths from the very beginning, having met with them during lectures, seminars, and mentoring sessions while we served as guest professors at the school. Over the years, we learned about their motives to launch doctoral studies, formulate research subjects, and choose appropriate methods. When they graduated, we asked five of the seven (those we had most contact with during their doctoral trajectory) for reflections on their triadic practice—being professionals, teachers, and researchers—a practice formed out of their doctoral studies. Four of them responded in writing, and one of them, Arnaud Hendrickx, met us for a conversation at the school in February 2013. The text below is a report of this bilateral exchange with the five doctoral alumni. They have all permitted us to share their reflections with others, for which we thank them. We have concluded that with these five alumni, the teaching situation at the school has changed; indeed, several of their colleagues will be joining them soon, thereby increasing the number of doctoral alumni. We dare assume that their...
Research as a driving force for change: on triadic practice in architecture

Competence in triadic roles will promote new, adaptable, conscious, and creative architectural practice.

The aim of this article is to illuminate the premises for the research studies undertaken, the resulting doctoral studies, and the contribution that this research can give to teaching a new generation of architecture students at the school. Further on, the article's intention is to present a case of how research in architecture can be a driver of change towards a new architectural practice.

From Dyadic to Triadic Architectural Practice

Practicing and Teaching Architecture

Architectural education has a long tradition of close exchange between teaching and professional practice. At most schools of architecture around the world, professional practitioners form an important part of the staff or are regularly involved in teaching. This is definitely a characteristic of the tradition at Sint-Lucas, where architectural practice is at the center of all efforts to develop research training and approaches.

Laurens Luyten recalls that before he engaged in research, he had always sought more general topics that would give meaning to both his broad engineering and educational practices. In this period before his doctoral studies, he pursued a kind of action research within both his practices, that of engineering and of education. He regarded this mode of working beneficial for both practices.

Nel Janssens worked as an architectural planner before engaging in her doctoral studies. Part of a renowned architectural office—that, for many years, was involved in conceptual urban practices and was known mostly for artistic urban studies through design—she later engaged in more traditional planning tasks. Nevertheless, she has been known mostly for pursuing urban studies through practice. These experiences from practice formed an important background for her teaching, and subsequently became material for research.

Arnaud Hendrickx practiced architecture, but because the bureaucratic regulations of the building industry tend to delay the progress from architectural ideas to built architecture, he wished to experience more direct results in his creative practice. Thus, he sought more immediate results in cooperation with artists. This new cross-field practice influenced his teaching and vice versa, and at some point, he wanted to reflect on the hybrid artist-architect practice and on his own practice-teaching work.

Thierry Lagrange, before engaging in research, shared an interest in both architecture and photography. This combination of different artistic practices and media was central for his teaching and work with students.
Jo Van Den Bergh found the basis for his dual practice, as an architect and teacher of architecture, in emphasizing the poetics of architectural conception and creation. He worked to make his students more aware of the strengths that poetics gives architecture.

**Extending the dyadic profile while training towards PhD**

A third aspect compliments the dual practice of teaching and professional application: that of research, which the doctoral studies extended for the five alumni.

Laurens, in his research training, found new tools to pursue his long-standing interests. After developing research methods adequate to his doctoral project, he concentrated on research, leaving professional practice for later. Laurens argued for this strong research focus not only because he had limited time, but he also concluded that further pursuit of a traditional engineering practice would not have been insightful for him (he was involved in over 300 projects during the 18 years of his career and could be regarded as a well-experienced practitioner). More, because he felt that the strict rules of building codes laid serious responsibilities on his shoulders and did not leave much space for his own creativity, he found that research gave him the space to use his imagination for original ideas.

Nel also left her architectural urban planning practice when she began her doctoral studies. Like Laurens, she found the time restrictions of her doctoral grant rather limiting, and the particular processes within her field of expertise—namely urbanism—made it difficult to integrate professional work. Nevertheless, she engaged in a new kind of practice during her doctoral studies, a design practice closely related to her research subject. Nel found this kind of practice rewarding as well as supportive to her research. The design projects she collaborated on and co-authored have had an explorative character, unlike a traditional practice that requires navigating between clients and an office. While useful for research, such design practice is short-lived and disappears with the fulfillment of the research project, though it usually continues to provide new insights. Nel believes that it is difficult to reconcile the two modes of work: that of an engaged design practitioner and that of a researcher, as the former is characterized by collective endeavors, while the latter is largely a solitary labor.

As a teacher, Nel asked her students at master level to review their bodies of work and distil recurrent themes and design approaches they had used, both individually and collectively. “This often revealed a design interest (and design ‘identity’) they were unaware of,” she said. “Once formulated, they could start looking at the themes as possible research topics and use this perspective to start their graduate projects.”
Halina Dunin-Woyseth and Fredrik Nilsson

Research as a driving force for change: on triadic practice in architecture

Arnaud had also grown tired of all the regulations, schedules, and restrictions of professional practice and wanted to reflect more. He decided to try to develop an architectural practice within academia, and, during his doctoral period, devoted just over one third of his work to teaching and to the organization of this role. More than half of his time he put into research. Arnaud said that this way of working led to the consolidation of a teaching structure and of themes. Research provided him not only a reinvigorated perspective on the different topics in his teaching but also new methods that he tested and used in workshops with students.

Thierry said, “Practice, research, and teaching came together during my PhD work. The development of the Matrix Method, an essential aspect of the PhD, led to several connections between the three principal activities. In a first stage of the research trajectory, I developed a situation wherein I looked back to my activities as an architect and a photographer. This led to a first way of using the matrix as a tool to generate creativity and reflection and to an artistic output. … Second, I used teaching constellations … to investigate the use of the matrix. The result is a fine-tuned method which is now an interesting tool for myself and for other colleagues in our discipline and beyond.”

Jo emphasized that his triadic roles—as a practicing architect, teacher of architecture, and architectural researcher—worked synergistically through the entire period of his doctoral studies. He looks at these roles as “permeable”, not parallel. His doctoral research, he said, “has been driven by practice, which has been a series of ‘interrogations of my practice’. I have closely observed my practice. And I have observed me observing my practice, trying to break through my habitual ways of seeing. My practice has offered what any research needs: a subject. Or should I call it an object? I have intensely looked at this: my critical practice in the context of practical practices. My design practice has been the indispensable set of data that had to be processed”. His teaching during this time as a doctoral student was primarily a test area—a laboratory, he said, “in which my intermediary research results, found through the thorough investigation of one critical practice in the context of critical practices, then could be further tested through several parallel critical practices (my number of students), by which I could further refine and calibrate my research process so as to do better”.

Post-doctoral practices
The five doctoral alumni have returned to their roles as academic teachers and university staff.

Laurens’s practice has changed emphasis compared with the two previous periods in his career. Now, he focuses on his educational practice, which consists
look here now
mapping design trajectories

Thierry Lagrange

Fig.5: Cover of doctoral thesis of Thierry Lagrange

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He advises architects-to-be, as he similarly advised colleagues in his previous professional practice. He said, “Knowledge developed in these design studios—this knowledge is based on a designerly approach of a structural understanding—is used in teaching theory. Of course, structural theory in itself is the basis used to develop this designerly approach, in order to support design collaboration between architect and engineer.”

Nel’s post-doctoral work, in its initial phase, is mostly oriented towards advanced research and is based on interdisciplinary studies where architecture meets philosophy and other academic disciplines. At these intersections, the premises for new professional roles in architecture are more clearly emerging. Additionally, her teaching practice has been extended into research education, and now she teaches and supervises doctoral students working in an international context.

Thierry, in his doctoral work, developed a fine-tuned method that is now an interesting tool for his work as an architect-photographer and scholar that can be used for people in other creative fields. He said, “The story does not end with the PhD. The research has an impact on my teaching, practice, and research in a series of new research, artistic, and business projects”.

Arnaud has found a new level of complexity in his interactions with students than he saw before his research. Many students ask questions that he is now able to answer in various ways: through discussion, theoretical argumentation, design examples, and exploratory design. He believes that his doctoral studies strengthened his professional and scholarly self-confidence, and he is therefore able to support the development of such a confidence among his students, now more sincerely and convincingly than before.

Jo, in his postdoctoral period, has found that teaching is a most appropriate channel through which he can disseminate his research. Further, he said, “Coming from my critical practice in the context of critical practices, my research sprawls out—call it a cluster bomb—so as to ‘contaminate’ the practices of my students and hence their future critical architectural practices. It is my strong belief that, by doing so, I contribute to improvement of the discipline of architecture.”

FROM DYADIC TO TRIADIC IDENTITY

In their pre-doctoral practice, consisting of both professional architectural work and of teaching architecture, the five prospective PhD architects reached a similar kind of reflection on the prospect of their further development as practitioners and teachers, each discovering the desire for a deeper exploration of their respective
interests. For one of the five, traditional practice seemed to have exhausted its potential to inspire new creative revelation and, therefore, improved teaching ability. For another, explorative design delivered conclusions that invited additional theoretical discussion. More, the combination of architecture and photography as one practice offered new and surprising creative and analytical opportunities but lacked tools for promoting them within architecture and other fields of practice. Yet another of the five was satisfied with his “hybrid practice” in cooperation with other creative fields but lacked a language to articulate his positive experiences as a base for better, more self-aware teaching. Even employing poetics as the basis for architectural discussion, by another PhD candidate, did not suffice to provide a satisfying practice and rewarding teaching experience.

For these five PhD students, doctoral studies offered new opportunities for the personal and professional development that each had hoped for. One of them found research to be a new and encouraging arena for his interests in studying in-depth engineering and its reciprocal relationship to architecture as well as his interest in exploring new notions in the design studio. Another of the students approached various knowledge landscapes that offered a new and broader understanding of the tasks that demand extended skills and knowledge from prospective architects. Explorations of and reflections on an architectural–photographic practice, for yet another of the five, provided the framework for developing a new “tool” for creative and analytical approaches that can be applied in these two fields and beyond. For another of the doctoral students, collaborating with creative practitioners from kindred fields of arts produced thought-provoking outcomes, prompting further creative endeavors; more, research extended his ability to develop and use adequate language for more expressive architectural and design teaching. Yet another of the five deepened his conviction not only of the importance of poetics as the basis of architecture, but also the conviction that future architectural practitioners need to develop critical practices.

As previously mentioned, we met all five of the doctoral alumni of the Sint-Lucas School of Architecture before they launched careers as architectural researchers and we followed their paths to PhD. We are impressed with how their interests, derived from dyadic practice, formed the basis of their doctoral endeavors, and we appreciate their search for new ways to handle research material while developing appropriate methods in their studies. We watched their profiles extend from a dyadic, professional–teaching practice into a triadic one—professional, teaching, and research—and that these various roles have worked reciprocally in different ways for each of them. Notably, we have observed that all of the doctoral students are interested in continuing to teach, though in a new way. This new teaching style promotes innovative approaches, greater intellectual curiosity, and better communication, resulting in a stronger intellectual self-confidence, the ability to go beyond the field of architecture as a generic way of perceiving and thinking, and a more holistic perception of poetics in architecture and critical architectural practice.

Research as a third pursuit, complementing the professional and teaching components, has in all cases changed the alumni’s identity of practice, and each has stated that it is no longer possible to return to a traditional practice. All five mentioned how their more traditional practices have transformed into critical, transdisciplinary practices, “spatial artistic practices,” etc. Common traits from the experiences of all five are that research has contributed to more cogent teaching, stronger self-confidence, broader repertoire of methods, and experimental educational situations—like laboratories where themes are explored and where research spreads and influences the future practice of architecture.

Definitely, we agree with the theoreticians of architectural pedagogy that architectural studies are deeply influential for the formation of future practice in the field (Salama and Wilkinson 2007, 3, 43). Therefore, we hope that with having these first doctoral alumni and their successors as teachers, Sint-Lucas will promote a new architectural practice, one that is more responsive to its time and is an active agent of change in contemporary society and culture.

References
This article is based on material from the following email exchanges and conversations:
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Luyten, Laurens. 2013. Email exchange, 19 February.
Van den Berghe, Johan. 2013, Email exchange, 16 February.
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**Research Training Sessions – Notes on the reflection workshop**

*How can I be open to serendipity?* In this text, we describe the research training seminar on critical reflection from our perspective as facilitators. Part of the Research Training Sessions, the seminar and was attended by eight students. In our last notes on the reflection workshop, published in *Reflections +16*, we pointed out the important role of reflection in our own practice as well as some theories on reflection by John Dewey, Maxine Greene, and Donald Schön. We will not repeat them here, but the reader may wish to read up on those different theories in the earlier issue, as some of the ideas informed the methodological considerations behind our workshop. The basic conceptual format of this seminar was an adaptation from Jan Fook and Fiona Gardner’s *Practising Critical Reflection*, particularly the ideas we applied around the “critical incident”.

Although each of our seminars on reflection is unique in its format and structure and in its response to the particular group of people who join us on each occasion, our most important idea stays the same: true learning only takes place when we reflect upon experiences. To learn from practice and research requires critical reflection; reflecting can be both a theory and a practice.

Important questions for us as facilitators are: How can we make reflecting on reflection something we actively do—instead of merely talking about it in an abstract and theoretical manner? (We remember something we actively do much better than something we passively listen to.) How can reflection become an integral part of one’s own practice?

Why is reflection in practice so important? Fook and Gardner summarize this cogently: Practice is characterised by risk, uncertainty, complexity and changeability

- Practice must rise above routine in order to be effective in unpredictable environments
- Knowledge about practice must constantly be remade
- Abstract theories might be inadequate to help in practice

Acquiring a critical and reflective stance in practice will thus help us dealing with those important insights. With these points in mind, we consider among the goals of our seminars that:

- Attendees of the session learn how to reflect and act in their practice
- Attendees understand how they can nurture such learning experiences
- Attendees strive to integrate and self-evaluate acting and reflecting in their own practices
In the workshop’s initial meeting, we asked attendees what they knew about reflection and then introduced some of the theories mentioned above. This first day, of three total, closed with an assignment: everyone was asked to prepare a short presentation of a critical incident from their professional practice, something they would like to reflect on. Critical, in this sense, did not imply a crisis—perhaps it was something banal—but an event of importance, even if attendees were not able to clearly express why it was important.

This critical incident should also have been something the person was both comfortable speaking about with others and that they wished to learn from.

The following morning began with presentations of the critical incidents. Each attendee had five minutes to present, after which the group spent twenty minutes helping the presenter to reflect on the description of his or her incident, repeating and paraphrasing what they understood, providing a different description, or “double description” (Bateson, 1979: 86) by mirroring their view back to the originator.

According to Gregory Bateson, such double descriptions—or in this case, multiple descriptions—increase our knowledge by combining information (or views) from two or more sources. Bateson uses the example of binocular vision, where the difference between the two different perspectives of the eyes results in a new order of information: depth. Similar to this, our “understanding (conscious or unconscious) of behavior through relationships gives a new logical type of learning” (Bateson, 1979: 133), a new “depth” in the form of multiple points of view.

Listening to descriptions of one’s own incident from multiple perspectives allows a person to view his or her incident through other people’s eyes. Potentially, through further reflection, this allows a person to examine his or her own beliefs and to unsettle implicit, fundamental assumptions and values that they may not consciously be aware of. The thought behind this process is to create such an awareness, and our goal is to create openness for new learning.

In the first stage of the incident description, we asked questions such as: Why was this experience important to you? and, What is it that makes this a memorable incident for you? We tried to frame the answers in meaningful language. The process took place in different stages over several days, and at this initial stage, we hoped to help the person reflect on the incident and get a better understanding of the implicit aspects that lie behind it. An important flag for us as facilitators was when those reflections were expressed as relating to emotions (e.g. nervousness or anger): it is here where the impetus for change may be found. What might the attitude, the hidden assumptions behind it be? During the discussion, the members of the group took notes of keywords and themes that were mentioned and seemed significant, to be used later.

Next, we encouraged the underlying values and beliefs to emerge and to make the emerging values behind their incident explicit, in the form of labels that express the attitude behind the incident. In the next stages, we tried to learn from such insights in different reflective exercises and to transform them into changed thinking and implications for practice by asking, for instance, How might you want to be different or act differently?

Before moving on to the next person, the analysis of the presentation was followed by a brief summary and recap of our reflections and the assumptions that emerged. We reflected on each reflective narrative and its developmental stages. Doing this, we reflected critically upon our own reflections as a group. This can result in another level of learning experience; for it is here that we really become aware of the value of reflecting.

As facilitators, we encouraged moments like this whenever possible, asking the attendees to step back and reflect upon the phases of our current reflecting. Through this, attendees became consciously aware of the unfolding reflective process and its importance. For us as facilitators, these moments provide important feedback about where we might have to tweak the process (i.e. how might we reflect on the reflection process itself?). We could ask what they liked or disliked about the last session: did it meet their expectations? What doubts do they have? Which comment most helped them to understand? We also encourage comments or suggestions.

Once all incidents were presented, the participants had a better understanding of the context of the incidents and of the role of the specific person in each. The session concluded with giving the incident a name. Often, these names were found in the presenter’s personal notes as a point that was mentioned (for example, “Waiting for a call” or “Waiting in a state of grace”). Once this name was found, we moved the focus to learning from the incident and its underlying personal values and beliefs. Important themes and keywords that emerged during the analysis of the incident were written onto cards, and attendees provided three cards for each person. We pinned these cards onto individual boards, 24 cards per person, which we grouped into themes. We worked in groups to help each other, moving the cards around and determining thematic relationships, which, for example, allowed underlying values to emerge, connecting to the emotions. Underlying values often became clearer through this process of grouping and labeling. For example, snippets such as “I try to be too perfect” or “I try to be too much in control” may lead us to important insights of why we behave as we do.
We found that, by the end of the second day, everyone had a better understanding of why their incident was important to them and a clear sentence or name that encapsulated this new insight in language meaningful within the group. This insight was often located within a cluster of different themes and traits. We left the day with another assignment for the next: to think about which aspects of the relevant themes required further reflection. Thus, if our example “trying to be too perfect” has emerged with the underlying value of “insecurity,” we could consider expanding this notion, or turning it around, reflecting on what might happen if we allowed space for serendipity and chance by trying to be less controlling and perfect. What might happen under these circumstances? Don’t we need to reflect further?

For the first two days, we reflected on past experience in order to understand the values and beliefs that drive a designer. On the final morning, we aimed to develop strategies from these insights that allow us to change our actions in the future. Pursuing our “perfection” example, this may lead to the understanding, “Not being in control can be liberating.”

The last day began with reports from the previous day’s sessions. Members of the group reminded us of their incident, summarized what had emerged through the previous day’s processes in respect to themes, changed awareness, held assumptions, affirmation of values, insights, understanding, and perception. This reflection is important: through repeated summarizing and paraphrasing, we create our own “double descriptions” and take ownership of our knowing. Additionally, concrete themes emerge which may require further reflection. The next step was to transform these insights into questions. A frequently unresolved problem is to show that theory can, in actuality, help practice. We address questions like, How can our informed insights shape attitudes that we can enact and implement in our practice? Where are you now? Where do you want to go?
On this final day, our approach was intensely pragmatic in nature and focused upon future actions.

We returned to the boards, using key terms to create questions that helped us develop new labels for new theories of practice. Such questions might include, for example, How to deal with stress? What about principles and values? The ego? Is my design a model or a method? How can I remain open to new insights? How can I make sure not to become conservative? How can I promote Aha! moments? As a result, we got an in-depth reflection upon models of designing and a better understanding of how to engage with challenging experiences. During this process, individuals named their new theory for practice and described their new ideas and how to implement them.

After these attitudes have been presented, we concluded with a final reflective session. Here we asked, What have you learned from reflecting upon your personal incident? What will you do differently as a result of these changes in your way of thinking? How can you use this knowledge to inform future action? What do you want to change, and how do you want to act differently? Which actions or strategies might be useful? How can you integrate reflecting deeper into your own practice?

During this workshop, the attendees became aware of the value of reflecting by practicing it as a group. They analyzed their critical incidents and got a deeper understanding of implicit values being held. Becoming aware of these values allowed them to understand their own motivations and reactions. Additionally, they developed strategies to inform future actions. In an ideal case, attendees could repeat this process whenever they experience a critical incident, which might enable them to become more critical and reflective practitioners.

Further reading
Bateson, Gregory (1972), Steps to an ecology of mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution and Epistemology, University of Chicago Press
Preamble
Some of the material for this article is harvested from essays written for the Design Cognition focus area that I have been conducting, since 2005, for the Research Training Sessions (RTS) organized by Sint-Lucas, School of Architecture, in Belgium. My experiences at Sint-Lucas have led to reflections about the union as well as dichotomy underlying the relationship of Research by Design versus Design Research. I also rely on long held views I first published in Psychology of Architectural Design (1989) and A Cartesian Approach to Design Rationality (2006).

Intent
In the Cartesian Approach (Akin, 2006, pp. 75-77), I describe the potential connection between design and scientific research, as well as applied research in engineering.

The sciences are engaged in their quests with a sense of ingenuity and courage, bordering on audacity. They assume that the truths underlying nature can be discovered. All of the difficulties [of this challenge] have not deterred scientists from pursuing this quest. If anything, both the energy and the results of scientific research have intensified. The one characteristic of this search, which remains unblemished by the intellectual skirmishes of the past, is the absolute rigor that must be applied to testing assumptions and hypotheses before they are admitted into the company of accepted theories.

In examining the field of architecture and its practices, we find approaches which are both sympathetic and in opposition to this position. First of all, architecture is an interdisciplinary field of practice, which includes the results of many disciplines of the natural sciences. In determining the integrity of architectural structures, for instance, the law of gravitation and its effect on the equilibrium of building materials brings into consideration theorems from the area of building physics. In determining the thermal comfort of occupants in buildings, practices based on laws of thermodynamics are indispensable.

Furthermore, there are areas of application in architecture, particularly in decision-making during design, construction, and operation of buildings, which employ concepts and methods of the information sciences. This includes techniques of Operations Research from mathematics, computer graphics from the field of computer science, and systems analysis from the field of management sciences. It is in this latter domain that architectural design becomes, at least, a potential contributor to the growing corpus of knowledge, rather than remaining a mere consumer.
In pursuing these ends, the field of architecture displays some similarities to the natural sciences. First, the principal pursuit of architects is that of creating new designs. These designs, in addition to responding to the behaviors of physical contexts and occupants also have to respond through stylistic expression to the psychological needs of both occupants and designers. These stylistic choices become fashionable for architects’ practice in cycles very much like the paradigm shifts that have been described by Kuhn (1970).

Second, architects are motivated to find tools that are as robust as those in the natural sciences for accurate explanation and prediction of behavior of buildings, whether these are manifested in occupants or natural materials and elements. Finally, architects are direct users of the sophisticated tools and technologies developed for the sciences in order to reach these ends. All of these factors indicate an ongoing if not a mutually beneficial relationship between architecture and natural sciences.

At the same time, there are forces that push the natural sciences and architecture apart. First, the fundamental posture of the architects, in practicing their ‘trade,’ is one of advocacy as opposed to the skepticism of the scientist. When the architect proposes a ‘correct’ solution to a given problem, at best she is looking for a good enough solution. Consequently, the motivation is to defend this position and persuade others to accept its merits. Before reaching this point of advocacy the architect of record has to consider alternative solutions as well as weaknesses of these alternatives. But the fundamental posture still remains as one of advocating a solution.

Given the constraints of time and cost, it is not feasible to search for the absolute “best.” A ‘satisficing’ solution is often selected by the architect (Simon, 1969); whereas, the scientist cannot remain content with such a solution. She is fundamentally skeptical of any solution until there is absolute assurance that all degrees of skepticism are completely eradicated. A similar distinction exists in the object of the architect’s search as opposed to that of the scientist. The scientist is ultimately interested in knowing what is, while the architect is interested in what ought to be.

Another distinction is the public nature of the context of the architect’s solution. As opposed to the selective audience of the scientist, architects’ solutions are intended for the general public or at best a small group of individuals, particularly in the case of residential design. This places rather different sets of constraints on the architectural problem [from the sciences].

Research-like Constructs within Architecture and Design

Design is legitimately seen, by many placed in the discipline, as the cradle of human experimentation and innovation for things yet to be created, as opposed to the natural sciences that attempt to explain, predict and control phenomena already known to be in existence. When the human DNA was discovered and measured, we could not only explain human traits and diseases, but also predict the occurrence of diseases. And with luck, now we can find the preventative and therapeutic treatments necessary to control their effects.

The difficulty of merging design and scientific research lies in the fact that exploration and innovation are not equal to explanation, prediction and control. Exploration in design is for finding or creating things that are not in existence and are deemed to be worthy of existing based on the imagination of the designer. Innovation occurs when these imaginings are implemented into tangible constructs – objects, organizations, etc. Hence, there are fundamental differences between art and science as there are between research and exploration (Akin, 2006).

The critical question that comes up from such considerations is to whether we should wear the both—and hat or the either—or hat when dealing with research and design. Should we bring design and research together to show how they are similar capitalizing on the strength one may draw from the merger; or should we show how they are different making sure that one’s tenets are not confounded with those of the other?

Fields of practice in applied areas of potential research like Architecture, Design, Construction, Engineering, and Planning also have a role to play. Emergence of new knowledge from the interaction of academia and practice is an area that justifiably should be of interest to all designers, as it is to other practice fields (Professional Doctorate Program, 2012). Since applied research ventures into the realm of innovation through engineering fields, this parallels an equivalent in the natural sciences. The research practices in these fields can be an analog for the type of research that we fathom for design.

What characterizes engineering research is akin to the underlying tenets of scientific research: transparency in describing problems, replicability of methods used, and validity of findings. And the basic construct that is the process engine of all of these research models can be simply represented as:

problem definition $\rightarrow$ solution generation $\rightarrow$ result
In addition to the clear roadmap this describes for the investigation of new findings, whether they are scientific discoveries or design innovations, it also allows others to verify the knowledge acquired through research, and to be able to understand and if necessary replicate the explorations and experiments that lead to the acquisition of this knowledge.

**Problem.** Including but not limited to: What is creativity? How do designers learn? What distinguishes a good design from a bad one? What distinguishes an expert designer from a novice? As findings accumulate, there emerges greater confidence in their relevance until such time when there is a paradigm shift (see section on “Problem Definition”).

**Generation.** Consensus about the methods of design investigation can be varied. Should we introspect about the answers; use empirical methods borrowed from social sciences; or should we use formal analysis techniques? Whatever methods we decide to employ there must be consensus about their goodness and must adhere to the tenets of research articulated earlier: “transparency of problem description, methods and findings, in order to allow others to verify the validity of knowledge and to be able to understand and if necessary replicate the explorations and experiments that led to the acquisition of knowledge.”

**Result.** Finally, there has to be an accumulation of substantial findings that emerge from this work that converges into a body of knowledge also through consensus. The mechanisms that bring this consensus to our collective consciousness, at a minimum, should include refereed journal publications, text books, conferences, educational programs with faculty and graduate students, professional societies, concerts, performances, shows, manifestos, installations, and buildings and environmental installations.

Incidentally, these are also the parameters that help us distinguish well-defined problems from ill-defined ones that populate both ends of the research spectrum: design and science (Simon, 1973; Reitman, 1964). While there are both design and science problems that qualify as well-defined as well as ill-defined, the latter is the irreplaceable touchstone in design. Hence this is neither an overburdening requirement nor an unfamiliar place for research-based design to be.

**Problem Description**

A notable example of Research by Design that takes its cue from applied research, as in engineering, is known as Design Research. The literature in this area is extensive and dates back to the 1960s. It has produced some of the critical ingredients in the emergence of new disciplines, such as important conference venues, journal publications, seminal works and centers of research. Since the 60s practitioners and researchers alike have enjoyed a plethora of such entities emerging: organizations like DMG, EDRA, DTRS, journals like Design Studies, CoDesign, and publications by N Cross (1984, 2006), H. Simon (1969, 1972), and D. Schön (1983); not to mention dozens of academic institutions with multiple faculty and graduate students focused on the subject area. As is the case in any domain that is recognized either through a field of practice or research, there are prerequisites that are critical to its emergence and recognition as legitimate. Through these explorations a coherent approach to defining the set of problems of interest emerges; as well as, consensus about what the first-order problems of a domain should be.

There are two immediate concerns about a scenario of this kind: the intensely individualistic nature of design and creative exploration does not lend itself to consensus and convergence that easily, and the counter innovative tendencies that emerge once consensus is reached and design work falls into generally acceptable categories (Akin and Akin, 1998). This can be a serious impediment to research about domains of innovation and creativity.

![Figure 1. Left to right and top to bottom: Renaissance facade, Neo-Classical floor plan, Modernist prefabrication and Post-Modernist exterior.](image-url)
The task of structuring the problem space in design domains like architecture can be built upon the notion that “paradigm shifts” should determine the current problem definition. In the architectural realm alone, we can capture most of the work done by all architects, save a few isolated pockets of obscurantist, through a series of stylistic categories such as Antiquity, Gothic, Neo-Classicism, Renaissance, High Renaissance, Mannerism, Baroque, Rococo, Art Nouveau, Art Deco, Constructivism, Modernism, Post-modernism, Deconstructivism, and so on. Buildings and building infrastructures that correspond to these periods highlight the problems that were prevalent for designers in each era.

These problems resulted in new technologies causing significant shifts in the way buildings are constructed. Innovations realized during the Renaissance (16th and 18th C.), Neo-Classicism, (18th and 19th C.), Modernism (19th and 20th C.), or Post-Modernism (20th C.), for example, were all based socio-cultural shifts enabled by new technologies (Figure 1). In the Renaissance façade (16th and 18th C.) the glazing area was increased to achieve greater hygiene inside the building. The pattern books of Neo-Classicism (18th and 19th C.), resulted in designs with flexibility of interior planning. The industrial mass-production of buildings was realized during the Modern Era (19th and 20th C.). And during Post-Modernism (20th C.), diversity of use and technology were admitted into the production of buildings.

This reinforces the fact that even creative domains like design and architecture are not immune to coherence and consensus of its participants creating pockets of imitative and replicated work. Thomas Kuhn captures this idea for the sciences in his seminal work on paradigms and paradigm shifts as a model for advancement of human knowledge. After each cohesive pocket of practice and belief comes a dismantling of the old regime and introduction of a new paradigm that includes a new set of problem definitions, solution generation methods and acceptable results.

### Solution Generation

Not only in art and architecture but in other engineering design fields, there is a good deal of field experience with methods that can get us from the problem definition to acceptable solutions. Even a cursory review of the field would result in a very long list: focus groups, brainstorming, protocol analysis, eye-tracking, surveys, cognitive walkthroughs, qualitative calculus, optimization, heuristics, introspection, and cost-benefit analysis. A number of these methods were described and discussed in publications, too numerous to include here (Akin, 1989, 2006, 2012). Below we will define a few that appear to be useful in closing the gap between research and design.

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<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
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<th>Research by Design</th>
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| | ... | *design diversity* |
| | *ethnography* | *pattern language* |
| results | *creativity* | *Renaissance style* |
| | *learning* | *Neo-classical* |
| | *design evaluation* | *Modern* |
| | *analogy reasoning* | *Post-modern* |
| | *co-design* | *Deconstructivist* |
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While introspection and brainstorming are naturally popular in design because of their adaptability to personal cognitive tendencies, they fail in terms of replicability and transparency. One of the ways with which we can get around the difficulties of introspected goodness of design or innovation is to look at structured observation of the design innovation during design or after implementation.

Table 1 lists a number of options for both Design Research and Research by Design for the three components of design delivery: Problem Definition, Solution Generation, and Results. The methods common in Design Research are: cognitive walkthrough, optimization, protocol analysis, cost-benefit analysis, design simulation, and building commissioning. The methods of Research by design are ill-defined and even those we name in Table 1, defy formal definition. One notable exception is Brainstorming.

### Results

Innovation through the perspective of the user is not new but remains a powerful ally of validating design intentions and innovations. Defining the problem -- design requirements -- and testing the goodness of a result -- how do we know that we have the result -- are the two bookends of the tenets of good design as well as good research.
The techniques of elicitation used for both Design Research and Research by Design must possess three key characteristics: Accuracy, Reliability, and Validity. Accuracy renders the resolution of discriminations commensurate with the natural units of the material being studied. Reliability, or Replicability, is the degree to which the same results can be reproduced when the same designs are assessed repeatedly. Validity is observed when an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure – to the extent that the scores on the instrument correlate with scores on some criterion of that which is supposed to be measured.

The techniques used in validating the results, consistent with these characteristics are Ethnographic Observation, Post-Occupancy Evaluation, Market Research and Online Testing (Figure 2).

In the Final Analysis

It should be evident to connoisseurs of the field that formative ideas about the integration of design and research are not in short supply. By the same token, the difficulties of the task are as numerous as there are ideas. Ultimately, we find ourselves in a position of mediating between conflicting and contradictory paradigms. In any event, a good starting point is to take stock of where we are in three categories that define research parameters, in general: problem definition, solution generation, and results. Our assessment of each of these, in the end, would depend on whether we are looking through the lens of “Design Research,” “Research by Design,” or hybrids that lie in between.

The strengths of the methods and approaches listed in Table 1, for Design Research include verifiability and replicability of Solution Generation methods, contingent on matching Problem Definitions and Results set. The strengths of the Research by design approach on the other hand are its support of individualistic, heuristic based, and intuitive approaches to research.

The merits of these types of research are well documented even in the case of the natural sciences (Akin, and Akin, 1986).

The weaknesses, on the other hand include the symmetric characteristics for both. Design Research is difficult to apply in the case if individualistic, heuristic based, and intuitive approaches; while Research by Design findings are often non-verifiable and non-replicable.

Thus, it is our conclusion that there is no “good” or “bad” as such, each paradigm – Design Research versus Research by Design – are best suited to certain research goals and they should be employed in situations where the advantages they provide are used to maximum effect.

Ömer Akin
References and Bibliography

Questions

Anyone attempting to research in areas like innovation, architecture, and art tends to find it necessary to take account of emotions, objectives, intentions, and other experiences—which are not part of traditional research. Emulating research in an area like physics tends to be disappointing, as the only emotions (and intelligence) involved are those of the researcher. One has to develop appropriate forms of research and apply them at the same time. The following distinction may help.

When we ask others a question, two types of answers can be expected to follow. The first arises when the person answers within the constraints of the question, as when he or she knows the answer (e.g. “What is your name?”). The second is an answer to the question being asked, for example, “Why do you want to know?” or “What is it to you?” In this case the answer is outside the constraints of the question and possibly can only be called a reaction.

For centuries researchers have attempted to avoid the second answer, either by choosing respondents who cannot respond in this way, or by treating such an answer as bias, as a form of resistance that has to be ended. This tendency has been justified by pointing out that whoever or whatever is able to respond to the question will also be able to change the answer. “If you want the answer to control me, I will lie and make a mess of your results.”

The origin of the wish to avoid the second answer is ascribed to Descartes (1993), who proposed that the researcher should describe the world around us, the res extensa, which can only provide answers within the constraints of the questions asked. Answering outside these constraints should be limited to the res intensa; for example, the world of the researcher. This he saw as a world of maxims, of instructions to doubt, to ask questions about questions.

The difference between the two worlds was emphasized again by Kant (1906). The world of the researcher is where the reactions of others play an important role. It cannot be described in the way of the res extensa. To understand it, one requires “imperatives,” or ways to limit what researchers experience. They would describe the res intensa only when they would be “categorical” and report on the world of the researcher as if no one intended to deviate. ¹

In more recent times, Kuhn (1962) pointed out that the world of researchers is

¹ His most notable example is the categorical imperative: Quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris (Do unto others as you would have others do unto you).
organized by collectives wherein each member strives to doubt his or her own questioning as well as that of others. In this way, they are expected to achieve a task together, like collecting answers of the first type and summarizing them as answers within the questions members ask. The task they are good at is acquiring knowledge, and Kuhn referred to such collectives as paradigms.

**Studying to resist**

It is well known that paradigms have a massive impact, not only in terms of their product (knowledge), but also in terms of personal characteristics. Anyone wishing to become a member of a research paradigm will do well to adhere to its maxims. This implies a change in attitude—usually temporary, but often permanently. The need to be precise becomes a skill in being precise, and the need to avoid bias in the task becomes a skill in critical thinking, and so on.

Many authors have argued that the human members of the *res extensa* (but organisms generally) are able to behave like researchers and often do so (Latour, 1987). This suggests that they may work better in the way that researchers are advised to work, often using maxims to organize and achieve a collective task. Collectives may be organized to help members change how they contribute to what they wish to achieve collectively.

In other words, the *res intensa* can be studied by going beyond the Cartesian form of research. Such a study deals with the reactions of people to researchers, i.e. to other people as part of the *res intensa*. The reactions can be constrained—not on the level of people answering questions, but of resisting or reacting to what others do. Organizing paradigms may help do so as they constrain the level of the interactions, not of individual actions.

This type of extension became an area of interest when people started to study social phenomena. At first it was attempted to continue to restrict answers to the first type (within the constraints). Nietzsche (1974) and Heidegger (1962) are among the most prominent to point out that an extension is needed, a paradigm to construct other paradigms. At present the search for such a paradigm has intensified, for example as a way to support “innovation”.

The study of the *res extensa* implies that researchers learn to adapt their preferences, emotions and objectives as part of working in a research collective. Studying an area like “innovation” requires the same: what is required is a way to help members strive to step out of traditional ways of behaving and products. There are many other areas, however, where actions tend to be outside the questions asked, including art and architecture.

**Steps**

Maxims to study the *res extensa* are widely discussed and explained in the literature. Members of collectives cooperate by using a language, a set of constraints that helps to clarify what each is talking about and how this may be criticized in terms of what type of quality. The constraints should only support finding descriptions of a “domain” in terms of the relationships between variables such that all parts of the domain are described.

If one wishes to study the *res intensa*, one will have to identify which languages each collective uses to achieve different tasks. An example is the development of collectives that aim to improve on the task of decision-making, to make its performance as effective and efficient as possible. Other collectives use languages that support the task of problem solving or, more generally, improvement of the *res intensa*.

Many efforts have been spent to find a language that is basic to all languages (in logical positivism). As this did not prove successful, it is accepted that one can only find two types: the language of variables (to deal with answers within questions) and languages that include some preference or value (to step out of questions). The former is designed to achieve one type of high quality, the latter to achieve two types—that of the “paradigm” and that of the “paradigms.”

**Examples**

Given the above, one may characterize different forms of research by the maxims that need to be implemented and by the results of doing so. The result of applying the language of variables is what is called knowledge. It can be used to support action. The result of applying that language (as part of constructing new paradigms) may be the language of decision-making. It can be used to help people cooperate competently, or effectively and efficiently.

**A. Language of variables**

- Determine a preliminary “domain” (also called “scientific object”);
- Identify relationships between variables of the object you wish to explore;
- Determine which resulting relationship fits the domain best;
- Improve the fit by excluding or including elements from the scientific object or from the set of relationships between variables.

Implementing these maxims should result in a description of the domain in terms of relationships between variables so that all variance of the former is explained by the variance of the latter. There is one quality criterion that a result should satisfy:
it can be used for any purpose, as any bias (resistance to what is asked) will have been eliminated.

B. Language of channeling
- Bring a number of people together into a preliminary collective;
- Have them engage so they start identifying the collective task of research;
- Determine which form of interaction makes the performance of the task more effective and efficient;
- Modify the language that constrains the interaction so the performance becomes more effective and efficient.

The result of following these maxims is a language that satisfies two quality criteria. The first is that the collective, in which the language is developed, becomes able to identify a task such that all members are willing to contribute so any resistance is included in the cooperation (this is the “paradigms part” of the paradigm of paradigms). The second is that this language is modified until it helps to do so effectively and efficiently (this is the “paradigm part”).

Note: implement language of variables only after finding the collective.

C. Language of problems
- Identify what future state you wish a part of your world to be in;
- Determine what state that part is in now;
- Select the trajectory between the two states from all possible trajectories that is the least expensive to implement in terms of time and resources;
- Determine achieving which future state is least detrimental to future states others wish to reach.

The language of problems is the result of developing the collective task of finding a language to study the res intensa when that includes solving a problem. The language may be implemented in case of a particular problem (rather than the language of problems). Again, it has to satisfy two types of criteria: the first is to support setting up a collective that is able to develop and solve a problem, and the second is to do so competently, or effectively and efficiently.

Conclusion

Over time, many areas have been opened for systematic research. Usually, it is first attempted to restrict such research to what remains inside questions and hence to avoid what is beyond them. After gaining confidence, it is attempted to deal with the latter: to modify objectives, preferences, and emotions that otherwise might lead to a reaction to the question (i.e. beyond the questioning). This has led to the development of competence based on languages.

Typical areas where maxims based on the language of channeling resistance may be applied include research by design, which starts from the recognition that design always includes some way to deal with resistance and values: to combine them, to change them, to improve them. Research to improve design thus requires a search for a suitable language—on the level where it can be applied (as under C, above) and on the level where it searched for (B).

References
An Architect's Testimony

Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,
Enwrought with golden and silver light,
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half-light,
I would spread the cloths under your feet:
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

W.B. Yeats, “He Wishes For the Cloths of Heaven”

“Je est un autre.”

Arthur Rimbaud

Although I am reliably informed that the inquiry has been formally terminated, I would like to end—yes, I understand—end my report to the ministry with some, let’s say, more unguarded remarks, these being as follows.

This, then, is a profession typically concerned with identity (“I is an x”), identifying and validating members of its tribe through delineating the non-tribe, adding a spoonful of this, a pinch of that, in a bid to add musk to a broth that has been kept on the boil for centuries. Rarely do we acknowledge the full, bloodied dimensions of its baffling untonguedness. To do so would be to confront what we thought were the foundations of what we thought were our intellectual premises. We agree, I think, that the sulking prisoner exhibits a sorry lack of imagination.

This is the reason I set out to test architecture by encasing your city in a web of my own devising, spun from a central frame, broad as an ocean bed but threaded high into the airspace over the city. In turn, it was patrolled by silent military drones delineating a virtual column wherein the curtains of the theatre of action would unfold, when (as needs must) the city would eventually come under siege from without. My web therefore had to be extremely fine-meshed, porous enough to permit engagement and pursuit in all its non-holonomic variety. This, as you know, was the first condition of the commission.
But to call it a web is misleading, for the structure was neither a net nor even a creaping quasi-linear mesh of diaphanous threads. We deploy the terms and metaphors at hand and find ourselves thereby entangled in associations that increasingly bind us. Picture a silk stocking tossed from a helicopter. No, my architecture was not "spun" by nature's programming, nor was it an artificial "network" designed for a "flow" of "information". To say that it was "hung" from an over-arching "beam" is also misleading, as this suggests some sort of "veil" is formed, a "curtain" creating a logic of "barriers", of "inside-outside", whereas what we added to this fine, historical city was rather a form of game that would retain the traces of its being played out on the stone flags for millennia.

You will say that it is not our job, as designers, to toy with people, nor to treat them as test subjects in experiments, and you would be right, were people involved. When swirling gales from the sea rearrange the fickle sand in the dunes, are people involved? When animals set out on their mournful treks along ancestral paths through the wilderness, are "people" even in the picture? How the jaw VOMITS FORTH metaphor! Wipe it away! There is a temptation, a temptation to think of humanity, to think of humanity as once having had some sort of intelligible shape and coherence (the eyes, wipe them!), of which our present population is merely the broken-down remnant, gazing, no, grazing on the ruins it has inflicted on itself; yet such melancholia, modish as it may still be in some universities and coffee franchises, does not stand up. It cannot walk, for it has no sense of direction and no retina rattling around in sockets to govern its desires and intentions. It is like a low-hanging swamp gas—discernable, and potentially deadly, but ultimately intangible as a turkey radiated by a tornadic storm. If you are truly a master of your fate, an engineer of will, would and can, you will walk straight through, your head would be held high, and you can look neither left nor right since such co-ordinates do not exist in the midst of gas.

You wish to observe the effects of our work, to measure, evaluate and judge what we have done. You claim to have eliminated bias from the expression of your preferences, and that your measurement systems and technologies of observation are accordingly up to this task. Your best officers are being recalled from slow test subjects in experiments, and you would be right, were people involved. When animals set out on their mournful treks along ancestral paths through the wilderness, are "people" even in the picture? How the jaw VOMITS FORTH metaphor! Wipe it away! There is a temptation, a temptation to think of humanity, to think of humanity as once having had some sort of intelligible shape and coherence (the eyes, wipe them!), of which our present population is merely the broken-down remnant, gazing, no, grazing on the ruins it has inflicted on itself; yet such melancholia, modish as it may still be in some universities and coffee franchises, does not stand up. It cannot walk, for it has no sense of direction and no retina rattling around in sockets to govern its desires and intentions. It is like a low-hanging swamp gas—discernable, and potentially deadly, but ultimately intangible as a turkey radiated by a tornadic storm. If you are truly a master of your fate, an engineer of will, would and can, you will walk straight through, your head would be held high, and you can look neither left nor right since such co-ordinates do not exist in the midst of gas.

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Yes, there are garrets, cellars, stairways, lobbies, entrances and exits—how, otherwise, would your spies find their childish hiding places? But these can be made to disappear as easily as they were once summoned. Sometimes I have leaned on a railing with the intention of striking up chitchat, only to find the handrail melt beneath my hand and my legs suddenly knee-deep in slurry. Other times I have observed pond life teeming, then freezing and fixed in perpetuity in aspic. We sack the museums only to see them reassemble on our streets. I add lighting, captions, utilities, vegetation, sewers, walls!—walls on walls! I walled the desert until it became a compact mausoleum! It is an architect’s dream to add form to the void.

These are the last words and may perhaps be heard only by the mute janitor and her mop. No matter. We witnessed each other. That will suffice. This is my testimony.

I have let go of so much. Now all that was relinquished is returning to eat me from within. I hear the snip-snipping of its tiny teeth during the insomnia hours. Sentence after sentence devoured. I would have liked to somehow unfold and hold forth an expression of love—a clown’s sodden bouquet, the bride’s fleeting prize flung from a suicide’s bridge, the fish agape at the shapeless feast falling from the heavens, the fishbone retrieved from the mouth, the lips closing on fingertips—but that was never included in the original plan. Press harder. Press harder with the pencil until the paper mocks you no more.

It is all there, the scent of rosemary on the grill, the spill of your laughter, the baby unfolding from its cocoon of sleep, wailing sirens, overhead fighters, castanet high heels, catcalls, choral practice, calls to prayers, hotrod joy riders, the roar of the arena—it is all there, and it’s all within reach. Yet I cannot reach it. They say that you came here while I slept. I wish I had seen you. A minute or two. Hands clasped. Outside the mesh. I dreamed of having a cage made and advancing towards you, but everything I built was built around myself; it had neither entrance nor exit. If I try to leave (so to speak), try to speak (so to speak), try to draw your world before it thaws and retreats, I find myself encircled by walls. The janitor has gone. The dust returns. Open the window. Let in the, if you will, people.

Architecture takes guts, I learned. Guts on the sizzling grid. I ask myself, what happens to dreams—can they die? Anything that dies surely once had some kind of aim in life, some purpose in being undead, conscious or not. So when they are finished, where do our dreams go? Are they drained, ironed out, stored in some underground freezer? Compacted, shredded, or incinerated? Are they turned into posters with which to mock the young? The air is being let out day by day.

An Architect's Testimony
Rolf Hughes
The thread is returning to its spool. The eraser has molted on the empty page. Shut down, unplug, recycle. My architecture was always a form of laughter with no lungs behind it. When I find energy, I tell myself, *It will be there, trampled by the feet of their children, and their children's children, outlasting each generation, an eternal resurrection of its putative ruination.* Increasingly, I forget the end of the line the moment I start at the beginning.

Tread softly, the poet whispers, for you tread on my dreams. But he was wrong. It is my dreams that tread on you.

*Rolf Hughes*
participants

contributions

participants
With the social, cultural, and environmental problems of today, a committed design attitude is needed more than ever. With this paper, we investigate the fragile genius loci—the soul of a place—and try to find out if a design attitude that is based on a profound respect for place could lead to more site-specific and sustainable spatial interventions. In many urban developments, we see that this attitude is lacking and that designs do not take into account the specific identities of places and their existing context, which can generate different types of problems.

This paper is merely the beginning of research on genius loci, as only the theory of Christian Norberg-Schulz and Jean Nouvel were studied. Some fascinating visions were brought together to understand better what the “soul of a place” is about and to sketch the complexity of a place-bound and fragile design (process).

In his 1976 book *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, Christian Norberg-Schulz writes, “Planning’ does not help much as long as the concrete, qualitative nature of places is ignored.” He stresses the morphological qualities of built structures as the reflection of our “being-in-the-world.”

In his 2005 *Louisiana Manifest*, Jean Nouvel also advocates a type of architecture that is more in touch with place. “Architecture c’est être attentif à la respiration d’un lieu vivant, à ses pulsations, c’est interpréter ses rythmes pour inventer … l’urbanisme faut établir des règles sensibles, poétiques, des orientations qui parleront de couleurs, d’essences, de caractères, de specificités liées à la pluie, au vent, à la mer, à la montagne.”

Adding a socio-cultural dimension to the definition of Norberg-Schulz, Nouvel says, “Aimons les architectures qui se souviennent des uses et des coutumes et qui révèlent les époques et les hommes qui les traversent.”

These two complementary perspectives prompt a number of fundamental questions: What does it mean to be “reading and understanding a place”? What is “the identity” of a place? How can a thorough observation of space lead to fundamental understanding of context? How can an urban designer work with this “essence” of a place? Would working in this way lead to proper and sustainable interventions?

These questions are part of an investigation into the character of a place, the genius loci, and were used as background questions in a workshop that took place in Liège from 12 to 16 November 2012, as part of the training for the

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master's program in Urban Design and Spatial Planning at Sint-Lucas Gent, KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture. In this paper, the various design processes are not described in detail but are summarized in such a way as to demonstrate how a profound reading of a place and understanding the identity of a location might lead to modest and place-bound design proposals.

Genius loci
In order to understand a place, we can examine not only its landscape but also its cultural, social, and economic data. On the other hand, one experiences the atmosphere and changing moods of a place when walking through it, which has to do with specific material conditions of the place as well as with the history and dynamics of its inhabitants. Joseph Rykwert writes, “Appreciated, seen, touched, smelled, penetrated, whether consciously or unconsciously, the city fabric is a tangible representation of that intangible thing, the society that lives in it—and of its aspirations.”

Norberg-Schulz makes a distinction between a space and a place: “Spaces where life occurs are places, in the true sense of the word. A place is a space which has a distinct character. … A place is therefore a qualitative, ‘total’ phenomenon, which we cannot reduce to any of its properties, such as spatial relationships, without losing its concrete nature out of sight.” When analyzing people using space, Norberg-Schulz places importance on “dwelling,” which, for him, is “belonging to a concrete place.” To belong to a place means to have an existential foothold. Architecture helps man to dwell. The basic act of architecture is therefore to understand the vocation of the place. This understanding is necessary before a conscious intervention can happen in a place. What do we need to grasp? What is this “vocation” of a place? How can this be understood?

Possibly, this is something we can learn from cultures that are built without spatial planners. In Architecture Without Architects, Bernard Rudofsky considers that “untutored builders in space and time demonstrate an admirable talent for fitting their building into the natural surroundings. Instead of trying to conquer nature, they welcome the vagaries of climate and the challenge of topography.” This kind of logic in planning and building has, for centuries, served the urban development of western cities, but in one way or another, this knowledge disappeared or became less important. For Norberg-Schulz, this “theory of place” can help to re-understand context so that new urban development can be based on this knowledge. He argues that human identity in general depends on growing up in a “characteristic” environment, which is why it is essential that an urban planner uses this as the basis for his or her design. “Most modern buildings exist,” according to Norberg-Schulz, “in a ‘nowhere’; they are not related to a landscape and not to a coherent, urban whole.” In this context, it is difficult for people to identify or orient themselves. In that sense, he suggests that the environmental crisis actually implies a human crisis.

Fragile?
Dreams, relationships, social contracts, art, aspirations: all of these are fragile but essential elements in the creation of the built environment. In the Louisiana Manifesto, Nouvel says that a designer should first find out what history and nature have already produced in a specific place. On one hand, place is about the landscape itself, containing existing buildings and their materials, light, wind, and trees. On the other hand, it is also about the people who live there—about their ideas, rituals, conflicts, and dreams. In this way, spatial interventions of several kinds could occur: those that deal with what is already there and try to respect local emotions; those that see and reveal the sediment of a place, that assume patina, that give a new orientation while respecting the traces of history, and that anticipate transformations through time; those that pay attention to the breath of a place or its pulse, that adeptly interpret its rhythm, and that resonate with a deep mystery—the soul of the place. Therefore, an urban planner begins with the analyses of the topography—the depths of the field, the feeling of the wind, sky, earth, water, fire, and the scents, trees, herbs, flowers, and flies—and works from location-based customs, traditions, and history. Nouvel writes, “Contextual projects have a link with the past and the future, are gritty and organic, direct and infinite, visible and invisible.”

The fragile genius loci
Where Norberg-Schulz makes a compelling analysis of natural and man-made places, and associates them with the existential needs of man, we see in Nouvel a fragile complement to the definition that has to do with the culture of a place. To Norberg-Schulz, cities “grow” out of a place according to an existential need; to Nouvel, architecture must be based on a deep respect for the place and on a true dialogue with the physical and socio-cultural context.

A workshop in Liège
Against this background, we organized an urban design workshop in Liège, with the intention to train students to acquire a greater sensitivity for the character of a city and to design spatial interventions that are specific to their local context.

4 J. Rykwert, “Finding some place in all the space,” The Seduction of Place, New York, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 34.
8 J. Nouvel, Louisiana Manifesto, Humlebæk, 2005
In Liège, it became very clear that the underlying landscape is the primary generator for the development of the city and its morphological growth. Rivers, slopes, vegetation, soil, and sunlight: all are natural elements that form the basis for settlements, and those factors explicitly played a role in the creation of Liège. Clearly, the Meuse river was the initial designer of the contemporary city.\(^\text{10}\)

Next to the Meuse, we found not only the historical heart of Liège and distinct neighborhoods, but also the heritage of the mining industry, including the typical effects on the landscape in the form of slag heaps (\textit{terrils}). The world expos of 1905, 1930, and 1939 all had a significant impact on the urban development of Liège; a striking design for the 1939\(^\text{12}\) universal expo by Le Corbusier highlighted the inspiring elements of the city such as the river and the \textit{terrils}. For that design, he did not choose to design closed “palaces” but rather an open construction on high columns so that the landscape would be visible under the roof, and so that the wind and water could be felt. By experiencing these elements, visitors would be able to record the essence of the city and its relationship with the landscape.

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10 R. Occhiuto, Pay($)age, Luik, 2012
11 Idem
Liège through *fragile genius loci* glasses

Four themes specific to the urban context of Liège were identified and named: Landscape, Specific Plots in the City, Expo Sites, and Station Area. A working group was organized around each theme, and students were asked to study and make thorough analyses of these specific parts of the city by undertaking repeated observations so as to get a comprehensive understanding of the place. Afterward, they used this knowledge to make balanced design choices respecting the essence of the place. This sensible design attitude was permanently instilled. It was noticed that this method gave students the opportunity to get to know Liège’s depth, leading to remarkable “fragile” and contextual proposals.

The Landscape group quickly realized that, of all the natural elements, the Meuse was the most important influence on the form of the city. Students worked with old maps and compared historic with present-day Liège and discovered that, in the nineteenth century, major arms of the river were either sealed off for hygienic reasons or channeled for flood reasons so that the identities of some neighborhoods were lost. The city’s relationship with the river changed over time, and the Meuse was no longer an element of orientation in the city. Norberg-Schulz writes, “To gain an existential foothold, man has to be able to *orientate* himself: he has to know *where* he is. … We understand that human identity is to a high extent a function of places and things … It is therefore not only important that our environment has a spatial structure which facilitates orientation, but that it consists of concrete objects of identification.”

The following ideas rose from among the students: “By restoring part of this historical water network, we will revitalise Liège’s identity. Historical buildings will be brought back to their rightful place, and a new diversity of waterfronts will appear.” The strengthening of this identity opened possibilities for new public water transport and city revival.

The group examining Specific Plots in the City researched different spatial identities in Liège. A psychogeographical map was made to facilitate the research and to evaluate the significance of 12 urban projects planned by the city of Liège. The group found four different morphological structures, and “each of the four urban identities have their own spatial logic and are a frame to evaluate and design projects in that framework.” The definitions of these four plots, each with their own identity, led to a proposal for future developments in Liège.

The Expo Sites group examined the impact of expositions on the urban fabric and decided that the proposal for the universal exposition of 2017 could put stress on the historical identity of the city. They searched for important historical elements and found citadels, ancient vineyards, slag heaps, and a historic road. In their design, this working group connected these four essential elements of Liège in various ways, so that they might again become

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16 Idem, p. 12.
accessible, both locally and in a larger network. In this way, the city and surrounding countryside might once again become strongly connected. By doing so, their design would revitalize an identity of Liège that was partly lost.

The Station Area group studied the area around the new TGV (high-speed train) station. This monumental building, designed by the Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava in 2009, has no connection with its surroundings. The old station area was planned in the nineteenth century with a certain spatial logic that respected both the historical paths along the river as well as the ability to open new streets like the Rue de Guillemins, which formed an axis from the nineteenth-century station to the bridge over the Meuse. Calatrava’s station largely disregarded this logic and put the new station in a place that is not at all connected to the historical urban fabric. Because of this lack of consideration of the local context, there is no longer a functional nor visual connection with the Meuse. Calatrava decided to make a new axis to the river. Therefore, a large part of the nineteenth-century urban material near the station was demolished, causing a large gap in the urban fabric. The students responded to this gap by consciously reinforcing the nineteenth-century axis to the Meuse. They chose to restore the city fabric near the Calatrava station with a dense, multifunctional tissue, some on the scale of the existing nineteenth-century surroundings and some on the scale of the international, twenty-first-century railway station.
Conclusion

Through the research in Liège, students found that the identity of a place—the genius loci—is fragile and should be handled with care. They also understood that a proper analysis and interpretation of the fragile genius loci can provide insight into the essence of a place that, on one hand, is about spatial and morphological forms, and, on the other hand, is about the social, cultural, political, ecological, and economic dynamics that affect the area. “Fragile” in this description refers to a respectful consideration of the place and its inhabitants with the intention to create a durable cohabitation, now and in the future. In this sense, any place (at any time) has a different limited spatial capacity, its own fragile genius loci.

The concern for fragility is well-expressed in the conclusions from the students in the Station Area group:

Our strategy is a way of looking at things that make our environment more plural and our understanding more critical. Fragile might be all about these simultaneities, where multiple stories need to be told, where coherence is more important than one-way ideologies. It is about the design of conditions, a design strategy against the objectification of design and planning.24

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This article is not about a concrete research project, but a personal review on the process of the ‘search for research by design’, during the Research Training Sessions 2010-12. Rethinking and understanding this process was valuable to take a next step into research by design.
1) RTS: Research for research as a landscape

“As an architect I’m working with space
As a set designer I believe in stories
As a human I’m interested in our Christian tradition”

These three statements where the start of an open process looking for ‘research by design’.

During the two years of RTS sessions, a personal landscape appeared out of different input from tutors. A personal belief in the values of our Christian tradition and a range of intuitive projects from the past, generated a landscape of possibilities and new understandings. Insights into ‘research by design’, and insights into my personal research. These understandings made, and still make it possible to develop new projects more aligned, and distillate a field of research. During the process I use diagrams as a representation of my ideas, which works very well. A diagram as overview, method of design, and a way of communication.

A constantly open mind was one of the reasons the RTS-sessions became a personal enrichment. Not trying to find something, but a permanent absorbing, investigating your own questions and redefining your ideas. For me, this attitude is an essential element of doing research. If you know what you are looking for, research can only be a confirmation of your set goals. ‘Research by design’ is a continuous process in combination with a permanent observation and reflection from an open question. By observation and reflection new things arise and unknown possibilities become visible. Research is to be prepared, not to search but to find. ‘Research by design’ is like playing jazz improvisation. It is open, constructive and only possible out of a lot of knowledge and teamwork. Gradually something unique arises. The RTS session about ‘practice based research’, and the first experience with the GRC’, were key moments to become aware and explore more consciously my know-how and skills as an architect and set designer. As an artistic value as well as a work method.

The question, ‘How can we reshape our Christian tradition’ was a starting point at the first RTS-session. This question gradually developed into a fascination for rituals and ritual spaces. Rituals, as human stories, are consecutive actions transcending the purely functional.

The experience and knowledge from the RTS-session, and the opportunity to realise an own research studio (Explicit!studio) made it possible to deepen and concretize this subject. The research studio ‘Rituelen rondom Rituelen’ meant a fast way forward, not only during the preparation but especially during the process.

1 GRC: ‘Graduate Research Conference’ organized by Sint Lucas School of Architecture and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
2) ‘Rituelen rondom Rituelen’ (explicitstuido 3IA 2012)

(Fig4: Diagram ‘Rituelen rondom Rituelen’)

(Fig5: snapshots from the proces ‘Rituelen rondom Rituelen’)
The explicit studio arises out of a personal research topic in collaboration with students interior design in their third year. The studio 'Rituelen rondom Rituelen' became an experiment to question, test and deepen the theme rituals and ritual space. What follows are a few elements which became visible during the process of this studio 'Explicit 3IA RR 2012'.

In the beginning there was only an empty space. We could not hold on to old habits, no automatism and no recognizable conventions. We had to start all over again and make our own place out of the empty space. A new place where we would work for thirteen weeks. There was the space with its own characteristics, an organization structure, a theme (rituals) and seventeen designers. By deconstructing our own fundamentals, leaving the security of the school and taking away the evident, like a chair and a table, the empty space has contributed to the fact that we had to reinvent our relation with each other, the relation with the space and with our profession: designing. Without realizing it, in this emptiness the 'ritual of the group' was born. It is like the description in 'The empty space' where Peter Brook tried to find the theatre without conventions and without prejudgment.

An open process where the journey was more important than a specific goal, and where we found the capacity to build on what was happening. Where we learned to appreciate and use the silence, listening and observing.

At the start 'Rituelen rondom Rituelen' was not a ritual in itself, but a place where we could design and work with the subject rituals. What started as an organization structure developed during the process into an open universe. Unaware we became researchers and research objects at the same time. Because of the open process there was not much grip. A universe, with a lot of invisible and visible lines and layers, where the constant belief in what we were doing was as important as trying to find the answer to our own goals: designing as designers.

After a while, the practical actions, the workshops, reflection tasks, the investigation of meaning, became not more than a structure, a driving force to move on. At a certain point rational thinking became unclear and appeared again as a ritual, in the shape of the oval. This form was not thought out, but expressed itself through our process and the space. The 'ritual of the group' materialized spontaneously half way through, and we questioned if it was possible to design from this ritual.

A dreamed breakthrough, but typical to dreams, difficult to realize. Out of the group and the ritual we decided to challenge ourselves and to make one design for our ritual with 17 designers. This choice showed us the limits and the power of individual creativity. By defining and using some rational methods, we could control the experiment and grow. My experience as a set designer and the process of making theatre performances formed the underlying foundation for this experiment. During the process of making theatre all artistic individuals are not working next to each other, but as one team for one production. Building on each other's ideas as a philosophy.

Out of the philosophy that the power of the group is stronger than 17 individuals, we created a design (scale 1:1) that enclosed the 'ritual of the group'. This scenographic oval space, which could also be visited during an exhibition, did not show the way we had followed, but made the focus and intensity we had experienced during the process, as a group and as an individual, tangible. This design was baptized with the name 'Give me a name'. An installation where every visitor could write on the installation itself, a name which describes his feeling and experience. At the end there was not one design but as many as there were names.

The experience of this research lab results in a next step towards defining a research question, and the start of some new projects inside Luca School of Arts and my own practice as an architect-set designer in relation to research by design.

The project 'Silence Parc' (under construction) will research the ritual of silence in collaboration with students interior design and the Machariusproject. A monastery garden ruin in the centre of Ghent will be the location to make the silence audible. The project 'Back to level zero' will research a site where the church disappears but the spirit and the people persist.

2 'Rituelen rondom Rituelen' refers to the idea that there are many rituals surrounding us, but also in the spatial meaning of around. How can we create space around rituals. 'Rituelen rondom Rituals' also refer to the book of Georges Perec 'Ruimte Rondom' where the act to observe and to understand every day life is necessary to look in a different way to that every day life.

3 The notion 'give me a name' was, without knowing, a sign for 'space without a name'
4 Macharius, a sacred project at the machariuschurch gent.
5 'Back to level zero' refers to the year zero as a new beginning. The word level is linked to our digital age.
Meanwhile the RTS sessions are completed and they have done what they had set out to do: bringing something into motion. A personal three days intensive work session, in an inspiring monastery, continued the focus and concentration of searching. It was more than a silence and quiet working place, it was participating in and feeling the rhythm of living in a monastery. This work session brings up a new landscape with the potential to develop into a research question. Again the diagram seems to work. The diagram as a sketch, a start, an insight, an overview and a way to communicate.

>'Space without a name' wants to search. It is the quest for places where people can find, in an urban context, the opposite and a balance of that urban mentality. In our urban society and urban way of living, it becomes more and more difficult to find places and moments of stillness and contemplation. Now the church as a 'genius loci' is fading away, this research wants to find new possibilities for existing places, and create new spaces on unexpected places. What is the relation between humans and their rituals (spaces)? How can architecture today create a home for the need for rituals? Is it possible that our society needs places that not yet exist?

The concept 'space without a name' is related to the concept 'the quality without a name'. With this statement C. Alexander describes the quality of a place as: “There is a central quality which is the root criterion of life and spirit in a man, a town, a building, or a wilderness. This quality is objective and precise, but it cannot be named.” When does a space have this quality in a way that functional actions transcend the function and become mental awareness or a ritual? So the 'space without a name' transforms into a 'space with a soul'.

>'The ritual as a story.
It is not only about architecture, but what goes on in between, ‘the theatre of every day’. A ritual is a continuation of physical and mental actions, so we can approach the ritual as a story. Understanding these stories as a foundation to understand, construct and reconstruct ritual spaces. For myself I distinguish four important actors:

*the story of the action
*the story of the location
*the story of the people
*the story of the symbols

6 The monastery ‘Roosenburg’ - Waasmunster designed by the architect Dom Hans Van der Laan.
What is the interrelationship between those points of view, and is there a balance they can reach, so we can speak of ‘space without a name’? These four basic elements determinate and are determined by culture.

> As an architect-set designer I want to be conscious about the distinction between architecture, as the construction, and the scenography as the meaning of the ritual space. Where are they coming together? When does architecture become a spatial installation of human actions? How can scenography bring sense into architecture?

> ‘Space without a name’ as a process.
By understanding case studies, concretise projects out of my own practice, permanent reflection and mapping, this journey wants to discover and visualise thoughts, methods, layers,... Through the permanent focus on this topic, each step will be building on the previous one and trying to go deeply into this subject. By research for design there will be a constant interaction between practice and theory, between generic and specific. As a permanent process that searches for more than an intuitive response to the lack of mental quietness and sacredness. ‘Spaces without a name’ will not only be a personal process, but will be built on a relationship with the field.

> this research wants to investigate as an ‘Urban Monk’.
‘Urban’, as biotope where mankind is living, as a symbol of our elevation, our way of thinking and acting. In this urban context ‘space without a name’ can be: existing or new places, private or public and individual or common. ‘The tree house’, is a nice example of how silence tries to find its way in the dwelling. ‘Monk’ as an attitude, a focus, a devotion, a path. Searching and deepening. As an ‘Urban Monk’ this research wants to go on its way, by and in relationship with participants, to develop the process and experience the results.

Writing this text, there are still a lot of questions, doubts and a lack of clarity, but to end with the language of the architect: ‘There is Building land’

In conclusion I want to thank, in the first place the whole research department, supervised by Johan Verbeke, the institute Luca School of Arts, to create the possibility and the context to search for ‘research by design’ during the 2 years of RTS sessions. Also the tutors for their inspiring, by moments confusing, input. And not in the least, the colleagues participants for their critical, and sometimes unclear, feedback during the sessions.

Geert Peymen
Urban Monk

**Bibliography**

The architect-heritage practitioner as a storyteller

Tracing the social significance of local built heritage in the framework of adaptive reuse.

There is an interesting parallel to discover between both the story and the storyteller the way Walter Benjamin states it and the cultural landscape and the architect. As in a story, the cultural landscape consists of different strata: every period, every act in history leaves its traces and relicts and consists of thin, transparent layers placed one on top of the other. The slow piling is revealed through the layers of a variety of retellings. Like the storyteller, the architect is the mediator between the inhabitant, the ‘resident tiller of the soil’ and the visitor, the ‘trading seaman’ on one hand and the landscape and building on the other hand.

This paper starts from my own practice as an architect specializing in the analysis and adaptive reuse of heritage—protected monuments mostly of small scale and local importance. When analyzing this kind of modest heritage, external sources are hard to find. In these cases, the true sources of all relevant knowledge are the buildings, the setting, and the landscape itself and their meaning for the community. In that respect, I argue that observing and processing these observations through designing is a powerful (yet underestimated) analytic means to unfold new layers and to stimulate the experience of this particular genre of buildings. Therefore, the main focus of my research lies on the search for and development of design strategies to (re)develop historical buildings in their context by reading, mapping, unveiling, and understanding their societal meaning for the individual or for the community.

What are our obligations, as architects, as citizens, to consider this special social and cultural value and respond in form? The main strategy mentioned in the title of this paper—The Architect-Heritage Practitioner as a Storyteller—has everything to do with a different attitude.

1 This paper is part of my doctoral research project, promoters prof. dr. Yves Schoonjans and prof. dr. Krista De Jonghe, Department of Architecture, KU Leuven.
The increasing attention for existing buildings can be seen in a renewed vision on sustainability. An increasing amount of literature expands the element of sustainability towards a cultural and social framework, a social sustainability.

The significance people give to a building is determined by the personal and shared memory, generating meaning in a cultural durable land- and cityscape and in buildings.

Within the academic world and government policy, one detects a shift in architectural paradigms from conventional to community-based architecture (from top down to bottom-up decision making) and the redefined roles of architects responding to this shift. But especially in heritage matters the vision is still very much object-focused and the decision-making remains top-down.

The Storyteller
A key point is that the architect-heritage practitioner is an outsider in the local landscapes and buildings he or she must study. He or she can never discover the world of meaning just by observing a place and doing a material survey (collecting information). The architect, a stranger, must develop the ability to take time to listen to both the nameless “resident tiller of the soil” and the “trading seaman”. Paul Valéry writes, “All products of sustained, sacrificing effort are vanishing, and the time is past in which time did not matter.”

Yet time is an essential feature for me in social significance assessment: the period of indwelling, the time in which meanings are uncovered by unveiling different layers and networks is fundamental.

The survey of the Architectural, Historical and Archaeological values (AHA values) becomes a tool to gain time in favor of the social significance assessment. The time spent to study the AHA significance gives the opportunity to support and to better understand the individual or collective attachment of the community to a heritage place (collect meaning). A long period of indwelling has to accompany the designing. The process of assimilation, which takes place in depth, requires a state of rest. Briefly, the practitioner learns to know the building better in its social, cultural, natural, or landscape contexts, and then begins to write its narrative.

A characteristic of the storyteller is to add something useful to the original story; this can be a proverb, a practical or a moral advice.

“Each sphere of life has, as it were, produced its own tribe of storytellers. Each of these tribes preserves some of its characteristics centuries later.”

Walter Benjamin
This is a fundamental element in the parallel between the Storyteller of Walter Benjamin and the attitude the architect-heritage practitioner can develop. Just like the Storyteller, the architect can be the mediator between the nameless local and the newcomer, retelling both their stories and adding his or her own experience.

Aside from the issue that usually prompts it, the work of restoration or intervention itself can be considered a dialogue across time and between successive generations, and as such, is a work in continuous progress. Its importance today lays in the interaction between different protagonists: the monument in its landscape (urban or natural), the client (newcomer), the (nameless) local inhabitant, and the architect-heritage practitioner. The question of empathy then becomes paramount.

Here, I would like to stretch certain concepts and tools questioning their value in developing empathy, such as the Endless Conversation, the Blur, the Palimpsest, the Spiral Cloud, Networks, and Appropriation as well as tools like Close Reading, the Drawing, Cartes Parlantes and Post Scriptum. Others will be developed later on as part of my research project (e.g. the Intelligent Ruin3 and the Living Landscape).

3 Term coined by bOb Van Reeth (1943), architect, first Flemish Building Advisor (1998) (Vlaamse Bouwmeester). He gave different lectures on the topic (Rotterdam 28th of August 2002)
“When the rhythm of work has seized him, he listens to the tales in such a way that the gift of retelling them comes to him all by itself…. Boredom is the apogee of mental relaxation… …The more self-forgetful the listener is, the more deeply is what he listens to impressed upon his memory…”

Walter Benjamin

Endless conversation
In addition to the historical, material layering, timeless and immaterial layers exist in the endless conversations between the landscape or building and the individual or community. Any place or fabric in the landscape may hold significance for many different people for many different reasons. Our interactions with the world of built heritage do not have to do necessarily with the Architectural, Historical and Archaeological values. The AHA values, now the primary determinants of significance for the heritage practitioner, can support and help better understand the attachment of individuals and communities to heritage places and items.4 (It seems to me, in reference to Leon von Schaik’s book on Spatial Intelligence, that there is a great challenge to develop further research on the theme of the importance of cultural heritage as “a common language” that different communities or stakeholders can “speak.”)5

People engage in a dialogue with the landscapes and structures where they live. One side of the conversation involves them giving meaning to places through the events in their lives, which have taken place in landscapes or buildings. Generations pass knowledge of these events down to each other. Even if the events have left no mark, people remember what has happened. They seem to “see” them as if they had mapped them; it is as if they carry around in their heads a plan of the landscape with all these places and their meanings in detail.

4 Jason Ardler, director Cultural Heritage in Social Significance, a discussion paper. Denis Byrne, Helen Brayshaw, Tracy Ireland, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Research Unit, Cultural Heritage Division, June 2001
5 von Schaik, L., Spatial Intelligence New Futures for Architecture, Published in Great Britain in 2008 by John Wiley & Sons Ltd
To become a great ‘storyteller’… with the freedom to move up and down the rungs of the own experience as on a ladder…” means “to be rooted in the people, primarily in a milieu of craftsmen…”

Walter Benjamin

The other side of the conversation is the triggering of memories and feelings by the simple sight of a place, even if this is a strange, new place: this is the landscape or fabric talking to us. We attribute significance to the environment. The way we see our environment is affected by what we already know or what we believe. Here enters the value of the existing buildings and landscapes for newcomers.

Blur

Although there is a growing interest in the intangible heritage, the current western approach to built heritage practice and legislation is still oriented toward material conservation and restoration, especially of monumental heritage and its AHA values. The nameless local inhabitant is more or less ignored. This does not mean that people are entirely excluded, but that attention is not focused on them. They are put outside the framework, and their presence is only indirectly apparent by the traces they leave. Remarkably enough, the “perimeter” of the site—the intangible and social significance—often seems to lie at the very center of the challenge of the project posted. Yet in meetings with clients, this rarely comes up as a topic of discussion—its existence either taken for granted or awkwardly neglected. Somehow, there is an expectation that the nameless should take care of itself.

Forgetting about the nameless is not difficult since it is often invisible or disappearing amid other elements, especially if one focuses only on the materiality of the building as historic data. This habit is enforced by the fact that there are no approved ways for tracing nameless data, although retracing existing elements and their agency could make them more intelligible and feed the understanding
of the current meaning of the building and how it acts in its environment. From this point of view, it becomes interesting to transcend the approach of concentrating on the fabric by developing strategies beyond the solely narrow focus on the object, and to relate it towards a bigger framework of cultural and spatial experiences, urban and landscape structures, and the relationships to urbanism and urban development. Interesting is the statement that is formulated by John Berger: “We never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves. Our vision is continually active, continually moving, continually holding things in a circle around itself, constituting what is present to us as we are.” Comparing it with a photograph: while zooming in and out on the object, we could simultaneously look at what happens at the borders of the picture, at what was hazy and indistinct at first sight. On the other hand, the architect should not take a central role as a teacher, but always position him- or herself slightly to one side. Sebald points as a writer, in the same manner as ghosts, a number of whom inhabit his stories “who are known for their habit of observing life from their eccentric position in silent amazement and resignation.” (Hebel, Logis, 19)

How to unveil the blur⁸ by means of design?

Illustrations of the parsonage of Meuzegem: Looking at it object-focussed, looking at the perimeter. Youngsters giving meaning to the building in its environment as a meeting place.

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8 Blur: noun, a thing that cannot be seen or heard clearly: origin mid 16th century (in the sense 'smear that partially obscures something') perhaps related to BLEAR, http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/blur.
Whenever spaces are rebuilt or remodeled, evidence of former uses remain visible or remain as ghost traces. The term palimpsest was originally used for a manuscript page from a scroll or book from which the text has been scraped or washed off so it can be used again. Historians use this term as a description of the way people experience time; that is, as a layering of present experiences over faded pasts. Architects, archaeologists, and design historians sometimes use the word to describe the accumulated iterations of a design or site, whether in literal layers of archaeological remains, or by the figurative accumulation and reinforcement of design ideas over time.

Once we understand how great the implications of the social and cultural values are and just how minimal the extent in the projects of adaptive reuse, we might add to the concept of the palimpsest the different values people contribute to an existing building or site (from the social and cultural point of view). The architect-heritage practitioner hunts the existing traces in the eroded constructions and inevitably destroys old ones and makes new ones. While intervening in historic buildings, he or she could enforce their significance by adding new layers of meaning hopefully making it possible for the beholder to see a new beauty in what is vanishing. Palimpsests can be seen as a form of destruction of the existing but could also be seen as new, value-added layers on top of or through yet-existing ones. The interventions generate quality if they are capable of having a significant dialogue with the already existing fabric.

Illustrations of the parsonage of Meuzegem before restoration. The local youth club Sagapo appropriated the building ‘in the mean time’ the time between the original use as a house for the priest and the adaptive reuse of the parsonage as a house of representation for the city of Meise, with its beautiful mural paintings of the 17th century, here still hidden and unknown under the wallpaper. Later on, once the city government got convinced of the importance of the building for the locals, they decided that there had to remain space in the parsonage for the community of Meuzegem.

How to map the different intangible aspects of this palimpsest that are reminiscent of the values inscribed in the material object?

9 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palimpsest

…A proverb is a ruin, which stands on the site of an old story and in which a moral twines about a happening like ivy around a wall…

Walter Benjamin
A historical building or site consists of recovered layers of traces and memories, hidden under dust and silence as pointed out above. As they are unearthed, they perform a role different from the original one. Analyzing a site by layering it horizontally, we can abstract a lot of information. We are used to looking at maps by considering masses and spaces rather than territories with enclosures and boundaries which express relations between individuals, owners etc. On the other hand, the landscape is carved and sliced vertically by walls and boundaries. Interpenetrating hinged points between the neighboring horizontal layers, we can detect the tangible: places, man-made landscapes, spaces, tracks, and the traditional monumental heritage—that which values cathedrals, palaces, and monuments and is of great (universal) importance, built heritage of local importance. Between the vertical slices, we discover the intangible: language, tradition, and ghost traces such as memory, identification, meaning, and relationships between territories.

All horizontal layers and vertical slices interacting with each other form invisible, three-dimensional networks and contribute significantly to the physical and mental identity of our (urban) landscapes. Manmade landscapes grow in an organic, continuous or discontinuous way. They are determined by this permanent evolution of use and reuse. Every new event or interaction intervenes in a specific historical situation.

From a social sustainable point of view: understanding the land-shaping factors of our cultivated landscapes and structures can help us in developing better and more nuanced urban and landscape strategies. In caring for what is already, as Christof Grafe\textsuperscript{11} states, we could come to a more sustainable vision of intervening in existing (urban) landscapes.

The initial image of layering and slicing appears too limiting here. Subdivision of the landscape fades into the background of human encounters because these experiences are omnipresent. Therefore, one could adopt the \textit{spiral cloud} as a more complete concept when considering the social and cultural significances that are not strictly material or time based.

\textbf{How to map this spiral cloud?} How to map the existing, tangible (collecting information) and intangible (collecting meaning) without too much tearing apart what belongs together, as different architects such as Peter Zumthor\textsuperscript{12} have been focused on in recent times?

\textsuperscript{11} Grafe, C. \textit{Dierbaar is duurzaam. Zes Stellingen rond architectuur, cultuur en ecologie.} Vlugschrift Vlaams Architectuurinstituut. 2011
The storyteller has counsel - not for a few situations, as the proverb does, but for many, like a sage. For it is granted to him to reach back to a whole lifetime a life, incidentally, that comprises not only his own experience but no little of the experience of others; what the storyteller knows from hearsay is added to his own. His gift is the ability to relate his life; his distinction, to be able to tell his entire life…

Walter Benjamin

Networks

A valid viewpoint on heritage matters does not always depend on the historical or archaeological value, architectural or cultural and social meanings of its individual buildings alone but rather on the network of small buildings and public spaces, landscapes that might not have much individual value but that in their grouping or agglomeration create a valuable human made (urban) landscape.

Even if the small historical buildings I study were initially privately owned, they became collective by their use, local significance, or representation. They are beacons, points of reference, or meeting points. They attribute the human scale to the landscape and are placed on walking distance from dwelling places or in between two of them. They have no mental barriers around them, even if sometimes they are surrounded by physical walls or hedges. In most cases, the historical building was appropriated (by the locals or nature) “in the meantime,” that time between the original occupation and the adaptive reuse. They belong to the well-known trusted things. Throughout the diversity of these small buildings, we detect a familiarity, images of everyday life. There is nothing heroic or spectacular about these buildings. The most important reason why we inherit them “unchanged” and why they got the status of monument or heritage is probably because these small buildings are guiltless, they are completely rooted in the ordinary. They are banal. Heritage can here be understood as literally what we “inherit”, whether we want to save it or not. Together, these inherited places form invisible networks, complex spaces of experiences. They are the places of individual and collective memory. This makes them places of attachment and recognition and hence, contributes significantly to the formation of a sense of collective space.

13 Corona Martinez Alfonso, Pinheiro Machado Denise, Lievens William, Petric Jelena, Schoonjans Yves, Vigo Libertad, Observing the materiality – Carlo Scarpa and the particular idea of cultural sustainability. In Readings on sustainability and heritage, architecture and urban culture in Latin America and Europe.
Interestingly, the idea of “patrimonialisation”\textsuperscript{14} says that the interest of a community or an individual for an existing structure or landscape becomes explicit the moment the building or landscape is in danger. All together, these buildings and sites form a stimulating part of the multi-layered environment and tools for community building. Different “urban tribes”\textsuperscript{15} can have their own collective spaces interacting with each other or not, together contributing to the public space accepting this plurality. As de Solà-Morales\textsuperscript{16} states, the collective is much more than the public or private; it is the space in which the ordinary life can play its play, where it can present itself today and can stay present in the collective memory.

How to map these invisible networks of collective spaces that interact with each other?


\textsuperscript{15} Term coined by Michel Maffesoli, a french sociologist, in his book “Le temps des Tribus” 1988.

Close Reading

To unveil the social significance and the intangible, different tools can be used. The research relies on a range of primary and secondary materials: archives, maps, drawings, paintings, photographs, artistic writings, essays, articles, oral stories, and books. Written sources are often hard to find as the micro, fragile scale of these small buildings hold a poor place in historiography. The method of observing existing structures in their environment by close reading is a result of recurrence. The reappearance of similar forms and objects (see “networks”) indicates a permanent and persistent investigation of the same phenomena, which manifest themselves differently in their context by their meaning today. Referring to daily life—enclosed by redundancy—the heritage practitioner should, in the case of small heritage, not focus on the unique but on the recurrent events and buildings that structure our life.17 The act of watching trusted, known things with a sharp eye may hopefully lead to real closeness.

The Drawing

Retracing the existing makes you see things differently. It makes the elements clearer and feeds the understanding of the meaning of the building in its context. The drawing becomes a tool for the eye. The act of drawing is a way of observing and therefore a way of reflecting on objects. You draw what you see; observation feeds the drawing and vice versa. The way of looking at buildings and traces is so close that the drawing is made two-dimensionally. Notifications are made in the periphery of the drawing and in notebooks. Traces are linked with stories, and the stories make you look for traces referring to the stories. This act is continuous during the whole project.

Cartes Parlantes18

Instead of maps, people in the Middle Ages used what the modern historian François de Dainville called “Cartes Parlantes,” which listed hundreds or even thousands of individual plots of land in a set of fields with the exact location of each. They were judged according not to the adherence to coordinates or scale, but rather according to the faithfulness with which they described relationships between people—usually landowners—and their physical environment. The medieval landscape was conceived in terms of objects, paths, and relationships between people and places. Boundaries always connected particular landscape features and particular individuals; they were, by definition, inextensible. These

17 Corona Martinez Alfonso, Pinheiro Machado Denise, Lievens William, Petric Jelena, Schoonjans Yves, Vigo Libertad, Observing the materiality—Carlo Scarpa and the particular idea of cultural sustainability. In Readings on sustainability and heritage, architecture and urban culture in Latin America and Europe.
18 The term Cartes Parlantes was brought under my attention by Brian Thomas Oles in his fantastic PHd ‘Recovering the wall.’
"Artistic observation can attain an almost mystical depth. The objects on which it falls lose their names. Light and shade form very particular systems, present very individual questions which depend upon no knowledge and are derived from no practice, but get their existence and value exclusively from a certain accord of the soul, the eye, and the hand of someone who was born to perceive them and evoke them in his own inner self."

Paul Valéry

Cartes Parlantes have an extraordinary narrative power. It seems to me a very useful tool to study the existing relationships between a building that is to be reused and the local community.

Post Scriptum

Finally, the heritage practitioner adds what might be considered a Post Scriptum, a “writing” after the main body of the work is already done—hopefully, making a better understanding of the existing. By adding new elements from already existing layers, tangible, intangible, or unknown or forgotten qualities such as the original concept, precious light, sound, memories, etc. are unveiled for the beholder. The guiding element is the social significance of the building in its site.

For example, in the parsonage of Meuzegem in collaboration with the artist Peter Schoutsen, we added the artwork Vooruitgangachteruitgang in stucco lustro, tactile for the “blind.” In the bell room of the tower of the St. Lawrence church in Wolvertem, we installed the artwork Vibration Trinity in reference to the pigeons (doves) sitting on the walls and roofs of the church and the Holy Trinity, expressed by three tuning forks, tactile for the “deaf.” The beholder is the stranger who can become the new storyteller. It is left to the user-reader to interpret things in the way he or she understands them, and thus the narrative achieves amplitude that pure information lacks.
Heritage, monumental and weak, in its context functions as a vehicle of social and cultural transfer and so takes part in the process of social and cultural re-newal. Can the social and cultural significance of small heritage help to generate their future significance? In other words, asking the question, “How to be continued?” in parallel to Storytelling, could become a tool for community building and help to accept plurality thanks to the endless conversation between the human and the place?

Gisèle Gantois

Using Narrative to Explore the Play of Conceptual Possibilities in Architecture

There is such a place as fairyland—but only children can find the way to it. And they do not know that it is fairyland until they have grown so old that they forget the way. One bitter day, when they seek it and cannot find it, they realize what they have lost; and that is the tragedy of life. On that day the gates of Eden are shut behind them and the age of gold is over. Henceforth they must dwell in the common light of common day. Only a few, who remain children at heart, can ever find that fair, lost path again; and blessed are they above mortals. They, and only they, can bring us tidings from that dear country where we once sojourned and from which we must evermore be exiles. The world calls them its singers and poets and artists and story-tellers; but they are just people who have never forgotten the way to fairyland.

Lucy Maud Montgomery, The Story Girl

A visit to the memory of her mother

The round, ceramic door handle decorated with patterns of flowers was only as high as the top of my head. With a firm grip, I swayed on it, peeking through the small crack of the wooden door, watching her, her and father, the fire in the stove, two old and smelly armchairs, the vintage lamps; the two of them alone together in the library, surrounded with what they loved most, books (more than their own children): books from floor to ceiling, books lying down, books shelved upright, books falling down, open books, books in piles all over the red-painted stone floor and on top of the oriental carpets, books on the turquoise table, around and under it as well. The table stood out like a strong square grid in the midst of this mass of books. No matter what surrounded her, it was her I saw, the rest was just the scene. The library was the most special room of the house because the smell, the air felt different in that room. It was special because it seemed to me that it was a place from another time, another country, and that it belonged to other people, different people from those I knew as my mother and father. It was like the room was holding memories through its walls, its chairs, the books and the pattern on the stone floor, the dark brown wood beams, and the picture frames on the walls. We had pictures hanging in the other rooms of the house, but somehow these were special. I was too young to understand then.
what I see so clearly now. “Do you remember when I asked you if it is because you are grown up, and I’m a child, that the room is different? Will my room also smell different when I grow old?” I asked.

Did I tell you about the wallpaper? Oh! On it were birds, monkeys, and oriental fruit, all in dark blue and many other bold colors. Fruit for which I invented the names and tastes of. I would close my eyes, let my finger run over the paper, and I knew what fruit or animal I was touching. You see, they had different textures: warm, furry, cold, and dotty. Some felt like they were red, while others had a yellow texture. On the afternoons that I came home early from school, I could be alone with her in the library. Those were golden times! The sunlight caressed the wallpaper, shining through the windows facing our garden. She asked me to shut my eyes and tell me what I saw through my fingers. How funny it was to see new things each time! So many possibilities! We invented hundreds of stories together. Even as my eyes were closed, the sun in my face, I could feel her presence like a warm breeze on my shoulders, on my back, and on the back of my legs. “What do you see?” she asked. “What would it taste like?”

Fiction as a means to a critical position

My research sets out to explore and experiment with different modes of writing fiction-based stories, like the one above, as well as the means to apply them to my research, a design project. These stories serve as a medium to develop a critical position toward my prospective architectural project and as a tool to carefully explore and design spatial conditions. I use fiction writing to translate the insights from architectural drawings and verbal discourse. Combining an architectural project with storytelling has helped me to bring my intuition into print and to work toward a more personal, intimate space.

In one of my early projects, “A house for a client,” KTH (2008), I discovered a powerful tool by experimenting with the means of presentation, i.e. by describing the project as if it were already built by introducing a letter written from the client to the architect. This approach allowed me to shift the perception of time so that the audience interpreted the project with more empathy and intensity, which made the transition in time and space a fictional construction in their minds. I discovered how a narrative could be told through dialogue, and how using an additional perspective and voice enabled the audience to understand the many layers of complexity as well as the original vision of the architectural project. Isn’t narrative in architectural design well-suited for exploring the play of conceptual possibilities?

Through narratives, we gain insight into words that are otherwise unreachable to us. We also learn about ourselves and the people around us: people we love
The invented researcher

When drawing a space, we inevitably use memories from places we have experienced, as in childhood (perhaps these places are blurry or dream-like). When thinking about a future place for example, a new city she is about to visit, one begins inventing a memory of the place that is constructed from images (in books, movies, etc.) and from stories told by others who have visited it. One makes connections between those images and stories to form an idea of the city in her mind. This becomes her imagined memory, so that, without actually being in the city, she can visit it in her invented memory.

The story is about a young Irish-Turkish woman named Sofie Marston. Sofie was born in Galway, on Ireland’s West Coast, where she lived all her life until her mother died, at which point she realized she did not know much about her mother’s past. Her mother’s sister was also dead. Sofie learns, however, that her mother had a younger brother, who is apparently still alive and living in city X. She wants to find him so that she can both give him the news and learn more about her mother. Perhaps he could fill some gaps? The search for her uncle takes longer than expected, and Sofie decides to extend her visit. Her love for the city grows as she walks endlessly through the streets of city X. She meets many strangers during her search, one in particular whose friendship may perhaps grow into a lifelong companionship.

Stories and education

Apart from my desire to gain new knowledge, my driving force has always been this question: how do we bring the subject more vividly into architectural education? How can a teacher encourage and prepare students for the reality that awaits them after graduation, and yet liberate them of the thoughts that might limit them when attempting to design new innovative, timeless spaces? In my experience, stories have guided me through this dilemma (my gut feeling) where I was able to reach an alternative result in my education. The most successful collaborations I had with those above me (teachers and employees) were with those people who encouraged me to break through my limits and find “the artist in me.” I found that my tool was to use stories and fiction. When challenged with a new task, an empty page or canvas, or a new Word document, we tend to fall into a pattern that ends with the same result. Not a bad result, but nonetheless the same. Can a simple creative exercise help to break through this pattern?
For graduation from the Royal Institute of Technology’s (KTH) School of Architecture and the Built Environment in Stockholm, students were obliged to write their own program; without hesitation, I turned to fairytales. After all, it is there where it all began. Reading stories as a child, I built castles in the air, daydreaming (defined as “a series of pleasant thoughts that distract one’s attention from the present”).

Isn’t it splendid to think of all the things there are to find out about? It just makes me feel glad to be alive—it’s such an interesting world. It wouldn’t be half so interesting if we know all about everything, would it? There’d be no scope for imagination then, would there? But am I talking too much? People are always telling me I do. Would you rather I didn’t talk? If you say so I’ll stop. I can STOP when I make up my mind to it, although it’s difficult.

Lucy Maud Montgomery, Anne of Green Gables
You, Sofie Marston, were strolling along the city of X this morning. You thought to yourself, “Oh, how dull and uniform my Galway seems compared to all this!” It is soon after your arrival to the city, the one you knew nothing about; nevertheless, you came here in search of your lost uncle, the only one left from your mother’s side. You thought that if you could find him, oh, you might fill the gaps in your soul. After two weeks, you have learned that you need more time to accomplish your (perhaps impossible) task. Today, you have arrived at park X and sat down near three men on a bench. “How funny,” you thought, “each one of them is such a character! The first one is tall and is wearing a colorful blazer. The second one is short with white hair and a white beard, and the third…” Your thoughts were interrupted when one of them began loudly philosophizing, as if continuing an idea:

“I think that its inhabitants only seldom make city X their own, which is why they don’t advocate an outspoken identity. This has a double effect. Everyone has their own freedom to create their own image of city X, but a strong, easily assimilated identity is lacking.”

The third man was wearing a black beret.

“You are absolutely right, my friend!” the one in the colorful blazer said. “Freedom to create their own image!” After a few moments, he added, “It’s also developed its culture and drawn strength from its own urbanity. Arriving somewhere and letting go of your identity, instead of reinforcing it: you can do that in this city!”

“But think about it! This city is also very damaged and has much urban blight, wasteland. That’s what makes me say that, that this city is an open city.”

“Hm, wasteland… It seems to me, in rethinking this metropolis with 2040 in mind, that we need to define a new type of scale, like the one conceived for Leopold II. Hence, the notion of untightening, which means that this city needs to open up to a larger scale, while at the same time re-centering.”

“That sounds like a schizophrenic posture!”

“But I think that the city of X of tomorrow can rebuild itself within this context.”

“It looks to me that the country of Y’s urban sprawl is due to a lack of structure, in terms of landscape. The solution is not to be found in urban planning, but in the landscape. The building of a strong landscape could create an identity stretching across this country.”
You thought to yourself that these men must be architects or urbanists of some kind. How dreadfully boring! But the subject did interest you, and hadn't you thought about this matter earlier that same day? Yes, and you were taken aback by how nicely they thought about it. The three men continued talking about the city, and at some point, you found yourself lost among concepts like the Eurodelta, barycenter, or something about a pole. Although you were interested, time was not in your favor, since the sun was going down.  

(Endnotes)

1 http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/series/how-to-write-a-book-in-30-days
3 This dialogue is based on the video “Brussels 2040. Three visions for a metropolis” // -51N4E and - Studio 012. Dialogues borrowed from Djamel Klouche (l’AUC), Freek Persyn (51N4E), Bas Smets (Bureau Bas Smets) and Paola Viganò from Studio 012 Bernardo Secchi Paola Viganò - Locomotif produced- Jo Ackermans and Robin Ramaekers.

Abstract
This paper discusses issues around and thoughts on why modern architecture is being abandoned. Do its materials and technologies depreciate (since many people have never liked modern architecture), or is it an escape instead to organic architecture that promotes harmony between human habitation and the natural world? This paper aims to provoke readers to answer the questions posed above while presenting the Estonian National Exhibition How Long is the Life of a Building? at the thirteenth Venice International Architecture Biennale. More, the paper is also about researching new methods for how architects and designers could discover the real needs of local regions and future users as well as the tangible and intangible values of the building, keeping in mind that the notion of value changes over time.

Introduction
Everything that is not used goes to rack and ruin. An astonishingly large number of buildings are vacant all over the world, in the countryside, in cities, and in Estonia as well. What should be done with the buildings from the 1960s and 1970s that currently stand unused? The topic also includes symbolic architecture, so to speak, that has attracted a great deal of attention in professional circles and is often the topic of conversation. What kind of life proceeded in them at one time and what could they be used for today, and who might need them tomorrow—what kinds of values do they have and how could they be preserved for the future? The question has been topical since 1964, when the Venice Charter established the principles of preservation, which relate to the restoration of buildings with work from different periods.

While no building lasts forever, in the wake of today’s global economic crisis, it is not particularly sensible to abandon buildings with noteworthy architecture and sufficient potential for contemporary alterations. In order to preserve a building, it must change because buildings age physically and become outdated. Unfortunately, everything that cannot be marketed dies out, including social relations. A historical building is like a work of art that has to be related to. Peter Blake remarked in Form Follows Fiasco (1974):

“All over the world, buildings that have been recycled from an earlier function to a new one seem to serve their users better today than they ever did before—and better than contemporary, brand-new ef-

http://www.boredpanda.com/abandoned-house-animals-kai-fagerstrom/ (22 August 2013)
forts designed and constructed to a form that supposedly follows and expresses its function. The best museums in Italy and Spain tend to be recycled convents or palazzi of the Renaissance or the Middle Ages, whereas modern museums, designed specially to display and celebrate the art of our century, look like cut-rate department stores with bargain basements up to the rooftop”.

One could continue with examples from the neighborhood of modernity. The reference point of modernism—that form follows function—naturally argues against this and poses a greater challenge to architects. As a living organism, architecture is constantly being transformed as a consequence of the efforts of new users, architects, and builders without belonging to its creators; it is independent and lives its own life, reflecting values that change over time. This affects people first and foremost, in our own lives. How are different roles divided up in preserving valuable buildings and in how they function? The government, architects and the media can shape public opinion. It’s a known fact that the nature of society has very clearly been expressed visually in architecture through the ages. What kind of effect, then, has the change in prevailing systems of government had on architecture and urban spaces in eastern Europe on a broad scale?

My research

As an interior architect, I’m absorbed by these questions as I go about as a passerby in different places in the world. My research project is about re-purposing an existing building through mapping the local region. I am looking for the functions by combining pragmatic needs and emotional feelings using human senses. The task is to find the values of the environment and to preserve these in the transformation process—keeping in mind that the notion of value changes over time.

How can new uses be found for buildings? The typology of a building provides substance for developing different lines of reasoning, especially if the plans and cross-sections of a building are viewed as a clean slate, so to speak, and the possibilities for re-interpreting life in that building are considered in polyfunctional schoolhouses, offices, libraries, spas, etc.—but these take the form of design speculations rather than fully-detailed schemes. I remember from early childhood how fascinating it was to explore the silicate shell of a gigantic, nine-story apartment building nearing completion. During the early years of the construction of the Mustamäe residential district in Tallinn, it was so easy to imagine my own future world in that space. In fact, the question of whether to build a new life from within a space outward or the opposite way from outside to the inside is of decisive importance. As an interior architect, I know that the former viewpoint can be complicated yet is nevertheless possible depending on the potential of the building, in other words on the possibilities concealed in its architecture. The latter viewpoint requires the architect to relate contextually to the surrounding environment.
environment and actual possibilities. What, how, and for whom? This is the inseparable threesome. The connection of these three is the key question for finding new solutions by using senses and feelings instead of the brain.

To analyze the spatial qualities, perceptions, and meanings of these spaces, I create site-specific exhibitions using different tools like lighting and sound. During the set-up process I ask different people (both in the local community and professionals)—who act as narrators—to talk or write about architecture, zooming in on the context and location of the building. This method has been tested in several ways in different case studies. The results from questioning different local people give me an idea of their attitude towards the revitalization process, as I see them more or less as future users.

"Architecture nowadays is not necessarily based upon architectural drawings or models, architecture studios can be much more diverse. A conventional awareness of architectural work will inevitably bring about a limited understanding of the education and practice taken by an architect. The spectrum of architectural work should include all built environments related to our everyday life; that is, architecture should be understood as the labour of those focused on human surroundings. The interpretation and questions exhibited in Venice, resulting from the notion of "common ground", did indeed focus on the human."  

The contemporary world’s most important architectural event, the Venice Architecture Biennale, held last autumn for the thirteenth time, provides architects with an excellent opportunity to have their say in important topics that relate to today’s world of architecture. Common traits in the form of similar themes and the use of similar language of form are noticeable at the architecture and art biennials that are held alternately year in and year out. The curator of this year’s architecture biennale, David Chipperfield, encouraged participants to relate to other authors and their works in both the usual way as well as provocatively, which fits into the overall title Common Ground.

Estonia’s exhibition project at the Venice Biennale dealt with how the respectable heritage of modernism is fading away, a process fostered by the economic conditions and political crosswinds that play games with plans. Why are distinguished and acclaimed structures that have functioned for only twenty or so

2 Han, Eunju, Space 539, Common Ground, Architecture for the People: The 13th Venice Architecture Biennale, 201210, p. 7.
How long is the life of a building? – 18’ 35 min / Urmo Vaikla
One Story – personal short stories about Linnahall – 25’ 24 min / Jaan Tootsen
Archive film about Linnahall – 6’ 25 min
years being abandoned? In Estonia, buildings with excellent architecture like the main buildings of former kolkhoz (collective farm) centers, recreational buildings and schoolhouses—in other words the best examples of our modernity—stand forgotten. The exhibition in Venice was about relating to time and space: from present-day abandonment of important and unimportant places to the alterations and opportunities of tomorrow, and posed the question: how long is the life of a building? This same theme bears, to some degree, on architectural heritage throughout the world in the form of both remarkable and more cursory phenomena.

Searching for different viewpoints of our contemporaries, I asked people from different fields to talk about architecture—abandonment, lifespan, potential, identity—and composed the bilingual exhibition catalog4 for the architecture biennale in order to stimulate pertinent debate not only in Venice, but also in Estonia, as the fate of architecture with symbolic value is a topical theme nowadays. The exhibition catalog looks at the Linnahall case study as an example of postmodern mega-architecture in Estonia's capital of Tallinn and about its legendary past, but also about analogies in a cross-section of dilapidated and abandoned architectural landmarks of modernity. It is also about potential visions for the future through modeling in student workshops, where the appealing idea of “hibernation” was generated.

Linnahall as a Memory Container

In the catalog, a larger story unfolds through the example of one building, namely Tallinn's Linnahall concert hall5. This monumental building, completed for the Tallinn sailing regatta as part of the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games, functioned for about twenty years and now stands vacant, covered with graffiti, and has aroused the interest of Docomomo (the International Working Party for Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement). Time stands still inside—the heating system drones and the clock ticks. This building that once functioned on an artery of the capital city is now used only as the training grounds for narcotics dogs and policemen, or as a helicopter-landing pad, or simply as a place to enjoy the sunrise. We translated the drastic situation described above into poetic visual language at the biennial by contrasting the initial (and official), monumental range of uses for the building with recent spontaneous uses to help viewers recognize and relate to analogous phenomena in their own urban and cultural space. The exhibition related to similar projects that asked the same sharp questions about declining and recycling modernism built during the Cold War.6

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4 http://issuu.com/vaikla/docs/how_long_is_the_life_of_a_building
5 Architects Raine Karp, Riina Altmäe / interior architects Ulo Sirp, Mari-Ann Hakk
Albania, Heritages, Biennale Architettura 2012, Common Ground, 29 August–25 November Venice, p. 198;
How should memories be shared between different generations? The aim of the exhibition was to discover the true soul of the building using facts from everyday life of the past with the help of people, the narrators—who give “the face” to the space and represent the abandoned space as a source of inspiration while creating a connection between the real and ostensible for the visitors, to affect the public with personal influence. The exhibition was a test-site to represent the selection of documentation related to memory of the place. It took the form of films—as real tools that perpetuate space and capture people in contemporary (art) projects—and some historical details, including signage from the building to provide the effect of the “real”. The movies’ were projected on large screens in a dark room, and a reflecting mirror wall from the opposite wall created a poetic space and feeling for the visitors of being present in the abandoned building (which may soon be demolished) sitting on an old leather sofa following the camera which lingers on the deserted Linnahall in its present ruined state.

“There is perhaps in an additional frisson in Venice which comes through the recognition that this structure represents the decline of what was once claimed to be an entire utopian system.” The other film presented different personal stories from the building’s users of the (Soviet) past—one that led them to realize an important truth or hinted at something in some way, or made them somehow happier or smarter or better. “A structure which could so easily be presented as a symbol of the failure of a much detested system, Soviet socialism, is instead presented as a rich field of Estonian memory.” The research that I carried out for the case study highlighted the importance of the building for people living in the twenty-first century in Tallinn and my personal experience and investigation at the Linnahall proved the same.

Potential solutions
How should the (Soviet) legacy of modernity be handled today and in the future? Modernist landmarks provided local villages and small towns with an identity, but now these timeless, now abandoned, buildings create a negative aura, one that could be perceived as a waste of spatial potential. They are excluded but not invisible. People have personal flashbacks with the buildings, and somehow they act as

Wolfgang Wolters, Mario Piana, Biennale Architettura 2012, Common Ground, 29 August–25 November Venice, p. 156;
Mark Randel with Thomas Kupke, Philipp Oswalt, Tempelhofer Freiheit, Biennale Architettura 2012, Common Ground, 29 August–25 November Venice, p. 130;
7 How Long is the Life of a Building (18' 35 min) by Urmo Vaikla / One Story (25' 24 min) by Jaan Tootsen.
8 David Crowley, Maja, 3 (73), p. 60-63 The Linnahall at the Venice Architecture Biennale.
bridges between the past and the future. Despite being a symbol of the occupying regime, it could be a container for personal memories. Thus hopefully the interest of the young people of today in looking with curiosity at those buildings as blank sheets, and the possibility for them to do so, will not diminish—which is also a protest in its own right, in other words resistance against the anonymous solutions offered by contemporary high technology.

That the legacy of modernism would include these monuments is positive, not only for the architectural observer but also for the pragmatic person. Heritage protection laws, which protect architecture as a form, allow contemporary standards of energy efficiency to be ignored, making reconstruction work cheaper. There remains a dilemma whether to protect the material or intangible values of historical buildings.

What are the alternatives for a modern era building if a new function is not found? Abandoned buildings are a common phenomenon in contemporary, shrinking cities where voids and emptiness are a part of reality. This makes me think positively about the advantage of architects in creating innovative future visions using the contrast of past–present–future as different layers of memory like palimpsest even if it means partly demolishing historical monumental buildings. How much time do we have? On one hand, we are not ready yet for changes and are waiting for better times. On the other hand, too many examples of unnecessary modernism remain. The elementary fight against dilapidation should be the interest of local authorities in order to preserve the buildings. Otherwise, we must accept their collapse and demolish the landmarks from previous times into splinters for reuse in constructing new roads or small harbors; these polar solutions depend on the local context.

References
How long is the life of a building? : Estonian National Exhibition at the XIII International Architecture Exhibition - la Biennale di Venezia / 2012; ed. Tüüne-Kristiin Vaikla
Transformation and Metamorphosis: Paolo Portoghesi; Materia 73
Shrinking cities: master thesis / Mari Luukas; Tallinn : Estonian Academy of Art, 2011
Tuljak café, Tallinn 1966, architect Valve Pormeister

Declined Modernity 2012, Tuljak café, Tallinn
Deep inside the palace of Atman.
{mapping the journey of inhabiting world and self}

‘A while ago I dreamed that I was having a discussion with a few colleagues; architects, artists and designers. Someone asked what my spatial work is actually about. Usually I don’t have a clear answer to that question. But this time it was different. I stood up and proclaimed, without hesitation: ‘my breath’.
I was surprised at my own statement and went on: “it is the same air as the space in which we live. So, if I create things in that empty space, it is about my breath. The exterior is actually the extension of my inside and my inside wants to make contact with the outside so, in making things, I and world are one”.

Figure 1. E-scape
150x90x50cm, bedsheets, foam, embroidery.
Anita Nevens. *Deep inside the palace of Atman*. 144-145

**Deep**

— adjective

1. extending far down from the top or surface:
   • extending or situated far in from the outer edge or surface:
   • taking in or giving out a lot of air: she took a deep breath
2. very intense or extreme:
   • (of an emotion or feeling) intensely felt
   • profound or penetrating in awareness or understanding
   • difficult to understand
   • (deep in) fully absorbed or involved in (a state or activity)
   • (of a person) unpredictable and secretive
3. (of sound) low in pitch and full in tone; not shrill
4. (of colour) dark and intense
   — noun
1. (the deep)
   • literary: the sea
   • figurative: the deeps of her imagination
   — adverb
1. far down or in; deeply

**Inside**

— noun

1. [usually in singular] the inner side or surface of something
2. the inner part; the interior
   — adjective
   [attributive]
1. situated on or in the inside
2. known or done by someone within a group or organization
   — proposition & adverb
1. situated within the confines of (something)
   • moving so as to end up within (something)
   • within (a person’s body or mind), typically with reference to sensations of self-awareness
   • informal in prison; she was sentenced to three years inside
2. [preposition] in less than (the period of time specified)

[origin: late Middle English (denoting the interior of the body); from in + side] ¹

**Palace**

— noun

• a large and impressive building forming the official residence of a ruler, pope, archbishop, etc.: the royal palace
• informal: a large, splendid house or place of entertainment.

[origin: Middle English: from Old French paleis, from Latin Palatium, the name of the Palatine hill in Rome, where the house of the emperor was situated] ²

**Atman**

— noun

1. the personal soul or self; the thinking principle as manifested in consciousness
2. Brahman considered as the Universal Soul, the great Self or Person that dwells in the entire created order

[origin: from Sanskrit ātman breath; compare Old High German ātum breath] ³

[origin: 1785, from Skt. atma “essence, breath, soul,” from PIE *etmen “breath” (a root found in Skt. and Gmc.; cf. O.E. æðm, Du. adem, O.H.G. atum “breath,” O.E. æþian, Du. ademen “to breathe”),] ⁴

Figure 2. ‘The Palace of Atman’ represented through a painting.

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¹ http://oxforddictionaries.com
² http://oxforddictionaries.com
Sewing journeys

The paper is first coloured, subsequently wrinkled and then smoothened, as to pursue coincidences and adventures. The surface is explored freely and penetrated with needle and thread, leaving traces of a walk. The skin of the surface is touched and it feels like a caress of the own skin. The difference between the skin of the paper and that of the body is soon lifted while a spatial landscape appears. The same happens with the mental exploration led by the hands. They seem to be finding a path through the complexity of mental mountains. This generates a kind of meditative state because my thoughts become action and one with me. It felt like I found a key to deal with the huge potential of body, life and world.  

Figure 3. Sewing Journeys, 6 x (30x20x5cm), paper, thread, watercolor

In a following reflection on processes and results of my creative practice, I try to acquire further insight into inhabiting the world and how that is related to the self. Within this practice, I am exploring the deepness of space in a search to enhance the feeling to ‘belong’, because the practice as well as the tangible result has the potential to influence one’s behaviour and the development of one’s identity. The experimental practice of sewing journeys on paper is used as a starting point to inquire about the qualities behind the connections between head and hand, journey and arrival, time and spatial potential in an attempt to map the depth of the palace of Atman.

Making is feeling and thinking

In trying to connect with the world and understand the meaning of life, I often let my hands decide what they do when they come into contact with a sheet of paper or other matter (Fig 3). Then there is no pre-defined plan other than an intuitive, multi-sensory exploration because my hands don’t think, I think. It also feels like I am released from the geometrical and formal vastness of a planned action. By that approach I try to enrich purely cognitive conception and come closer to the first intentions of man to dwell. Sashi Caan explains that the intention to build an “early shelter satisfied—or attempted to satisfy—emotional and sensory desires that the outside world alone could not provide.”  and that our need for stimulation, is perhaps even more pressing now then our need for shelter. I have the feeling that I come to know more about these emotional and sensory desires by using the skills to produce spatial experiments, but what that is correctly, I do not know at the time that I am using them. It is the sort of knowing that Michael Polanyi calls tacit knowledge. According to Polanyi, when we grasp a tool or, like in this case, engage with the paperwork, “we extend our bodily equipment and become more effective and more intelligent beings. (…) Tacit knowing now appears as an act of indwelling by which we gain access to a new meaning.” So wisdom is within the hands that seem to think. Richard Sennett asserts in The Craftsman that “Thinking and feeling are contained within the process of making.” He continues with saying that understanding the making of things ensures that we treat things with a degree of concern, so that “we can achieve a more humane material life”.

The skin of the world; landscape of the body

In the “sewing journeys” (Fig 3) a journey of multi-sensory experiences develops, empowered by an aesthetic manipulation, the colouring and wrinkling of the sheet of paper. It is made more tactile as to become more adventurous and stimulating. Touching the paper than feels as the touch of the own skin and the difference between the two is gradually lifted in the experience of making the work. The spatial landscape entices the senses and emotions and is thus an emo-sensory field-of-possibilities.

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5 A description of the work process of experiments with paper, needle and thread.


The arousal encourages contact with the matter through penetrating the surface. Like the paper is first a representation of the landscape of the world, so the paper landscape in turn is the representation of the surface of the own body. Pallasmaa speaks of the *embodied image* 10 whereby the mind is stimulated by a picture with emo-sensory qualities and thus is enticed to visually and mentally caress it. This tactile paper landscape is such an image and I conclude from it that it also has the potential to affect human behaviour: “...once space has been bounded and shaped, it is no longer merely a background: it exerts its own influence. The "theatre of action" to some extent determines the action.” 11 (fig.4.)

**The world within the self is shifting boundaries**

Gradually, the surface of the paper becomes symbol for that of the world. Freely travelling with needle and thread, the hand is going for a walk in the landscape of the mind. It is a kind of emo-sensory map of the relationship between the self and the world. The surface is touched, borders are scanned, places searched and concave opposite convex forms compared in their potency to be habitable. It is like the “Carte de Tendre”, (fig 5) a map about love. Territories of a fictional country called “Tendre” are graphically represented with distinct routes that literally anyone can follow to find or lose love. We are not used to make or read maps of emotions or experiences, nor do we have such a representation-technique in the conventional process of architectural design. This type of maps could be further developed as a representation of spatial experiences. They can become like a house in a poem which Bachelard explains as “a place where the universe can unfold. It is both cell and world. Here, geometry is transcended.” 12 The interaction with the self is the key to unlock the cell, as such, also the borders are negotiable. A border and a key are not just physical elements, they are also a mental, social and a political agreement. Although this often is not poetry, it might inspire us because: “In poetry there are no dimensions and there are no boundaries.” says Bachelard. So how we perceive the world determines its borders.

In the sewing journeys we don’t see a clearly defined border but rather a contact is made, a relationship is established between the body and the outside world. By this intensive and interactive relating, the boundaries between the various dimensions are lifted. “A house that has been experienced is not an inert box. Inhabited space transcends geometrical space.” 13 Space is, after all, “the simultaneous co-existence of social interrelations at all geographical scales, from the intimacy of the house-hold to the wide space of trans global connections.” 14 Hopefully, with this understanding of space, we can become capable of infiltrating more worlds and shift more social and even budgetary limits in the conception of spaces.

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14 Massey, Doreen [1994] *Space, Place and Gender*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, p168.
Anita Nevens
Deep inside the palace of Atman

“The room seems to be dressed in parity to the self-reflective body that inhabits it... What one might assume to be self-indulgent or decadent decoration may be found to be a sign of self-expression.”
Mark Taylor and Julieanna Preston. Intimus

Defining territory
When we return to the sewing journeys, we see that the act of penetrating the surface is a connection. Once connected, it means arriving ‘home’. The connection is further defined with embroideries as to conquer space and domesticate nature. One’s presence is captured by leaving traces. The territory is occupied by this act of self-expression. When I, as a young adult, was colouring the wallpaper of my room, it was a similar act. (Fig.6.) I became part of the space (belonged to it) and thus acquired an intangible and tangible place in the world that I then could experience as ‘home’. J MacGregor Wise explains that home and identity are rooted in someone’s body and self. “Home is not an originary place from which identity arises. It is not the place we come from; it is a place we are.”15 Sashi Caan even suggests that: “…the experience of interior space does not begin, as many architectural definitions erroneously hold, at the threshold of entry from the outside. On the contrary, that entry experience is secondary. Instead, interior space begins within us and includes the surroundings in immediate proximity to our bodies.” In the end, personal space is not a question of how we perceive existing conditions but, rather, how we express ourselves in a spatial context.”16 The spaciousness of that expression or ‘home’ can then be described as a ‘milieu’. “Milieus cross, pass into one another; they are essentially communicating”.17

At home in who we are
So even if the home is a milieu, if we want to explore it deeper, we have to go deeper in the ‘being’ there. In embroidering the sewing journeys, the mind is trying to fix that moment in making it tangible. The traces we leave behind are a series of opportunities to meet our own being in the ‘now’. In that ‘now’, explains Eckhart Tolle in his book ‘The Power of Now’ “lies the opportunity of liberation at an instant.” That moment is the threshold to “true happiness and spirituality”.18 Because of the hand, the mind is able to follow and live in that moment where life exists and can be fully experienced. Our ‘breath’ as a symbol of us being alive is thus a symbol of the place where we come ‘home’. An endless process of contacts between inside and outside, between self and world, strengthens our identity and the house becomes a place with meaning; i.e. ‘The Palace of Atman’. A representation of the palace couldn’t possibly be one of a physical house, but something with more meaning. For me, it is a painting that hung in my bedroom and in which I could dream away. (Fig2). Bart Verschaffel says in his article on the interior as an architectural principle: “Het is de architectuur die leert wat binnen en buiten is, en het model levert voor wat zelf zijn-of willen zijn-is. De architectuurverbeelding formuleert niet zozeer wat de mens is of nodig heeft, maar...

At home in making

The act of creating a place is where the place exists. The tangible place is a process through which the intangible becomes perceivable and experienced. With the making of things, we become connected to the outside world, we enter it and affirm our existence. The home dwells in the manipulation of it. “Home is becoming within an always already territorialized space” 20.

Because of the manipulation, we can “belong” to the world. According to Merleau-Ponty this continuity between the inner and the outer world is where an ‘osmotic relation through multisensory interaction with the artwork, world and self becomes one.’ 21

In the work E-scape (Fig 1), the act of embroidering the Island is making the intangible, tangible. The place exists within that action. It becomes a physical as well as a mental refuge and is both model and furniture: a place to either escape to, or meet oneself.

Conclusion

The reflection on the above mentioned practice was an attempt to make the ideas behind it more explicit. The works are processes or representations of possible habitable places, but often rather experiments to study space in its potential to enhance the feeling of belonging to the world besides dwelling in a fixed architectural structure. I also see them as a ‘user’s guide’ to inhabit the world. In addition, they may have the potential to enrich current design-methods and empower its tools.

In this practice that starts from the inside out, there are no boundaries between disciplines, life, art, design and architecture. Therefore this type of work requires special methods of research that I would like to develop and discover through creating more, because “I have to make in order to know.” 22

Anita Nevens

Significant architecture makes us experience ourselves as complete embodied and spiritual beings.

In fact, this is the great function of all meaningful art.” 23

Juhani Pallasmaa

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Movement and motion.
Research on blown glass in craft, design and the arts.

Without having been aware of any intention or purpose, my interest in glassblowing and its cultural differences and relation to art and design led me to travel to many interesting “places of glass” throughout Europe. While gaining experience, I was also actually doing fieldwork, observing what was going on and coming in contact with the discussions in the field. Over and again, speaking from practical experience, I was confronted with the subtle and specific skills that are needed for glassblowing, which raised a particular question: why are there not more interesting, updated, handmade, and high-quality glass products that examine cultural heritage, actuality, and identity? More, could an exploration of the process of designing via criticizing and researching and an analysis of the tacit, subtle, and specific hands-on craft of glassblowing, lead to new products or designs? I am convinced that such an exploration has great potential for the future of the design of three-dimensional glass. Generally, people have different roles in the design and creation of glass pieces; this means that there is a gap of uncertainty where these activities pass from one mind to another. In this paper, I aim to present the progression in my exploration of glass design and making as well as to bridge the gap between those two activities through a systematic search, i.e. research.
The relationship between glassblowing as act, sport, or dance and the final form of an object or product part of the systematic and conscious cooperation between the human body and the behaviour of the material glass as visualized by different media, appears to be largely undefined. I wish to explore this form of cooperation with the aim of identifying constraints that may help systematize that relationship. This exploration may become a form of practice-based research as well as my personal contribution to the area.

For example, hot molten glass behaves in different ways depending on its composition. Meaning, if the goal is to make an object using different kinds of glass, different movements are needed to achieve the same result. The reverse is also true: if the same movements are used with two different kinds of glass, different shapes result.

To achieve the preferred shape requires practice and understanding: one needs to know and feel the material. This, of course applies to top professionals in many arts, like violin players or ballet dancers.

Using different media, like video, to visualize this process could serve both as a tool or artistic medium as well as a way to (re)generate knowledge.

The images below illustrate the previous discussion of the gap between maker and designer, how that gap might be bridged, and what new ways of designing might be developed to contribute to the field of glass-blowing.

These images show the results of experiments, or reflections, on glassblowing.

Figures 2 and 3 show a cylindrically blown shape with horizontal threads, beginning from a drip, that are applied around the cylinder. The cooperation between glassblower-designer and glassblower-assistant is very important in this experiment, as the movements of two must be like one. For each drip and horizontal line, the assistant brings bits of hot glass, which the glassblower-designer applies in a vertical line, aiming to keep them from sticking to each other and to create straight, horizontal lines. Maintaining and adjusting the temperature of the glass requires delicate timing in this experiment. Precise timing is also required for
the movements: to create each drip and line, the pipe holding the hot cylindrical piece of glass is turned around one time exactly, and the glass thread is pulled off quickly. The end of the thread is incredibly subtle with its slightly rounded end (fig.2), and the threads of glass themselves are slightly melted into the surface of the cylindrical vessel.

This kind of experiment is not only difficult to do but also illuminates the core or the “soul” of the production process. It requires skill and discipline as well as patience and coordination. It requires taking a step beyond the known, or rather, beyond what was tried previously.

While working on this experiment, I wondered whether the result would be interesting and hence whether it could lead to a product for manual or industrial production. To do so, one could make a mold based on this striped cylinder, reproduce it in another way, or develop it further to create a prototype for production.

Additionally, I wonder whether the production process could be turned into a systematic design method and be made part of the research process. Such research might help increase knowledge in the traditional sense, but also in the sense of craft knowledge. The experiment and my reflections on it constitute an example of design by doing or research design by doing, whose major characteristic is the attention paid to the qualities of material as part of the process.

Figures 4 and 5 show a more simplified (and improved) experiment, compared to the initial one. The refined cooperation between glassblower-designer and the glassblower-assistant is again very important. Here a thread of glass is applied to a long, hollow blown piece of glass. Again, temperature and timing must be perfect. The glassblower-designer makes different movements with both hands. The left hand controls the pipe holding the hollow glass piece and makes small movements almost like vibrations forward and back, while the right hand moves the molten glass bit brought by the assistant in a straight line. The resulting wavy line is made as if by the movements of a sewing machine that finishes buttonholes and looks like similar to the form of an electrocardiogram of a heartbeat. Figure 4 shows a line with sharp curves, while figure 5 shows a more refined line with round curves: the result of more subtle movements.

Figure 7 shows the production of the lid of a honey pot (fig. 8) and the way the human body reacts to how the glass is perceived to move. What is shown is a fraction and fragment of a movement that requires a high level of skill to perform. The methods used to produce the lid are inspired by the traditional techniques used by the glassblowers at Murano, who are known for their very high skill in the craft. The economic crisis of 2008 has had disastrous consequences for these and other highly skilled glassblowers in Europe, which gives rise to questions about the future of glassblowing.

In figure 8, the lid is ground by hand to make it fit on the big vessel and close perfectly. The pot is then filled with honey, a natural product.
Considering Murano and the changes its admirable craftsmen have to endure, I then think of glass, glassblowing, medicine, healing, protection, content, value, power, economy, art (cfr. J. Beuys), the shrinking population of bees, ecology, environment, nature, culture, and more; and I wonder: is there an end to reflecting? Albert Einstein would have said that if the bee disappears from the surface of the earth, man would have no more than four years to live.

The text and images above are related to two Research Training Sessions: Forms and Processes of Knowledge hosted by Halina Dunin-Woyseth and Fredrik Nilsson; and Reflection, hosted by Ranulph Glanville and Michael Hohl.

Mariken Dumon

Notes:
1. “Making = thinking” of fig. 1 refers to the exhibition ‘Making is thinking’ (23/1-1/5/2011) which was held at Witte de Witte, contemporary Art, Rotterdam (NL) and the published catalogue: GRAY, Z. (ed.), Making is thinking, http://www.wdw.nl/wdw_publications/making-is-thinking/, last consulted April 2013.

Participants of previous Research Training Sessions
BY DESIGN FOR DESIGN XYZ / A READER

BY DESIGN FOR DESIGN (BDFD) is a mix between a temporary work floor shared with fellow researchers, artists and designers and a pop up exhibition open for public. Its 6th edition, BDFD XYZ took place June 19, 2013 in the White Box at BOZAR Brussels. Art critic and curator Sven Vanderstichelen and visual artist Ermias Kifleyesus granted both kindly and enthusiastically of their time taking to heart their role as special guest participants while star sparked chef David Martin of BOZAR Brasserie honored us with his refined and tasty food creations. My warm thanks to all 3; to the people at BOZAR and at BOZAR Brasserie; to Ben Robberechts, Gudrun De Mayer, Maaike Waterschoot and Anneleen Van der Veken at LUCA Architecture; to the Research Training Sessions participants; and to all who contributed.

BDFD proposes an exercise in formulating and crash testing concepts and ideas about creation and potential research the designerly way. Partakers are incited to act as the designer, architect or artist that they are, within and by means of that research.

Each participant is asked to produce in advance in the medium and in the discipline of choice a work that prefigures in a tangible way a possible output of potential research or creation. All of these prefigurations of output are then exposed. That exhibition makes out the material on which we work together - reverse engineering the prefigurations of output into designs of research potentially leading up to such output.

Regular RTS participants and special guests participants meet on equal foot. Designed food interventions keep us going.

Marc GODTS ‘1961 (B)

Initiator and art director of the BY DESIGN FOR DESIGN research training session. Architect. Independent Practice. Experimental work entitled Work in Dimension Zero, experiences on scale 1:1. Co-initiator of the free association of designers FLC extended [FLC being short for fucklecorbusier], working on collectivity, on spaces of limit and future conflicts. Holder of its legacy: EX-FLC. Teacher at LUCA School of Arts, KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture, Brussels. Initiator of the former EXPLORATIVE trajectory. Co-initiator of REAL masters trajectory in architecture and co-initiator of the CALIBRATING master lab. Doctoral candidate, Doctorate in the Arts, field of studies Architecture: KILLSPACE, about a possible awareness environment in support of architecture that extends beyond just the built.

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http://bydesigning.architectuur.sintlucas.wenk.be/rts/the-sessions-list/97-by-design-for-design

Marc Godts

BY DESIGN FOR DESIGN XYZ / A READER

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Marc Godts

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Special Guest Participants

Ermias KIFLEYESUS
°1974, Addis Abeba Ethiopia (B)


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I have lived and worked in Brussels, (Belgium) for many years. I make drawings, paintings, films and installations and work independently as well as collaboratively.

For the past four years I have been focusing on a project located in international telephone cabins where I install pieces of paper or canvas on the walls and table that over time become covered with interactive marks, notations and traces that individuals record and leave as they pass through the space, talk on the telephones, wait for their calls to connect to and from all points of the globe. These cabins are the lifelines to people’s distant places, past and future, the containers of present connection. I visit the cabins every week and often collaborate with whatever imagery I find there, finally I remove the supports from the walls when I feel they are ready to complete in my studio. This process takes different amounts of time depending on the location and intensity of the cabin use.

My work is about investigating connections, transience, meaning, differences and similarities between time and place. These telephone booths are also connected to Internet, video games and fax machines. They are charged with the importance of connection to anywhere and everywhere in the world. The cabin marks are akin to cave paintings, evidence of fact and fiction, conscious and unconscious scribbles, numbers, codes, needs and dreams, each mark is a fragment of recorded life. The final works are complex, interwoven with layers of doodles, text and imagery, as well as meanings that hold echoes of absence and presence. The surfaces are dynamic with seemingly infinite varieties of material, even punctured and mended at times. The works are containers of emotion and the very human impulse to leave evidence of unique lives. The races of people, time and society are my inspirational springboards, they are contemporary interlinked histories honouring urban lives and the infinite connections between the people of the world.
Seducing analogies between love for art and pleasures of the table. Inhaling and experiencing, devouring with the eyes, sharing. A sublime contact.
During my education to Master of Visual Arts, Three-dimensional Design, option Ceramics and Glass, I came in contact with molten liquid glass and glassblowing. After graduation I spent some years abroad and travelled through Europe to gain more knowledge and experience about hollow glass. Since 2010 I teach at the Glass Department of LUCA School of Arts, campus Sint-Lucas Ghent and work as artist/designer and glassblower.

mariken.dumon@luca-arts.be

The artefact exists of two self-made pieces of glass. They show a shot of my research interest that is situated amongst other things in the gap between designer and maker. In my opinion speaking from experience, there is a gap between those two ‘disciplines’ concerning blown glass, which leaves out possibilities for the design of hollow glass.

The research shown in the two pieces of the artefact is based on research in the process of making itself (glassblowing) or designing from within the properties of the material.

In this tangible example a high level of skills is required, as well a refined cooperation between the designer-glassblower and the glassblower-assistant who realise the pieces. Coordinated subtle movements are involved, as well as practical insight and understanding of the nature of the material. A thread of glass is applied on a hollow long piece of glass. Temperature and timing need to be perfect. The glassblower-designer makes different movements with his/her both hands. The left hand is moving the pipe with the piece on by small movements - almost vibrating - forwards and backwards, while the right hand moves the glass bit brought by the assistant and attached to the piece, in one straight line. To illustrate: the line is made like the movements of a sewing machine that finishes buttonholes. It almost looks like a visualised registration on a display of the vital functions of a human body, for example an electrocardiogram of the heartbeat, but then in glass.

The first piece (stage 1) shows a line with sharp curves. Reflecting and improving on that, a more refined line with round curves as result of more subtle and refined movements and timing, is created in the second piece (stage 2). Could this artefact of be an example of what could lead to ‘new’ design or design methods or processes? Which values do they question? What is the potential of it?

Photographs:

1 Research experiment ‘movement’ (practice), glass on glass, 37.5 x 10 cm, 2011, ©Mariken Dumon.
2 Research experiment ‘movement’ (improvement), glass on glass, 34 x 12 cm, 2011, ©Mariken Dumon.
Bert JOOSTENS
° 1978 Dendermonde (B)

Studied in Brussels (Architecture Studies), Antwerp (Theatre Studies) and Gent (Printmaking).
Teaching at LUCA School of Arts.

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ROL (roll)

if one would unfold this ROL (roll),
one could count eleven overlapping pictures
and a half one,
seemingly reproductions,
printed in black and numbered
(27) (29) (34) (36) (38) (10) (13) (15) (18) (20) (23)
the number of the first half picture is missing (seemingly cut off)
but the word zeezicht II is left
the elevation of this roll is a rectangle
the plan (or top view) is a pair of glasses

Rol (roll)
20 x 12 x 41 cm,
photocopier paper,
acid free paper tape

Anita NEVENS
°1968, Asse (B)

Lived and worked in Singapore 2006-2013, present Nederhasselt. BA Interior Architecture, Set design, Acting and Performing, Sculpture, MA of Arts. Teaching furniture and interior design at Luca School of Arts, Ghent. Works include interactive installations and architectural furniture.

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Deep inside the palace of Atman

(Changing the perception of reality by unfolding the hidden potential of architectural furniture in its relation to humans)

The proposed possible research output is a series of artefacts, installations, interactions, performances and workshops using different media like models, sculptures, furniture, video, drawings, poems, texts ... Artefacts, art and architecture have the potential to infiltrate life. Creating and using artefacts then is an investigation of life with the possibility to stimulate meaningful experiences like the feeling of belonging to the world. By incorporating and unfolding social, mental and emotional qualities as well as the physical aspects hidden within artefacts and the language of design, these experiences will be stimulated and discovered.

Via languages like words, images, models and stimuli referring to our body, the artefact communicates with people who then understand or misunderstand and read their environment while acting accordingly. During this interaction, people are often conditioned by habits for example the conventional functions in a house and take the labels for the real thing, therefore depriving themselves from what they really need.

The research is aiming to find solutions where mental and physical world become more connected instead of based on habits, conventions and language. This will happen through a specific interaction with architectural furniture that goes beyond the mere pragmatic and functional use people expect.

When harmonising life and world, our inner self and our outer world, the material and the immaterial world, there is an enhanced feeling of interiority, a sense of self and a feeling of belonging. These qualities address the full potential of a human being that is more then a physical body only or separated from the mind and emotions. Art and design can become the embodiment of life and stimulate experiences with an elevated awareness and behaviour.

Deep inside the palace of Atman

prototype
installation 100cm x 100cm x 100cmH
suitcase, wood, fabric, found objects, models
Pieter-Jan SEDEYN

(B)


pieter.jan.sedeyn@luca-arts.be

PUNTENWOLKEN

Mijn onderzoeks- en interesseveld is gegroeid uit mijn professionele ervaringen in optimalisatie, inzetbaarheid en uitwisselingsformaten van driehdimensionale vectormodellen. Meer bepaald het gebrek aan eenvoudige en logische manieren om digitaal materiaal te herbouwen en het verschil in aangeb. en visue tussen ontwerpers en ingenieurs in eenzelfde CAD omgeving. Terwijl de intrede van digitale hulpmiddelen een ongezinde flexibiliteit vooropsteelt is daarvan in de praktijk van driehdimensionale vormgeving weinig te merken. Naarmate de softwarepakketten zich verder ontwikkelen en elk hun specifieke deelgebied in het CAD process proberen toe te eigenen wordt de output hiervan ook steeds specifieker en meer rigide.

Tegelijkertijd zijn er reeds vele pogingen ondernomen om een standaard uitwisselingsplatform te creëren om de automatisering van deze processen te waarborgen. Werd dit proces in de branche ter herinnering, met wisselend succes, echter allen met een gemeenschappelijke beperking; verlies van informatie. Specifieker het proces van ‘downsampling’, waarbij het uitwisselbare formaat uitsluitend minder informatie heeft dan het originele. Tijdens mijn participatie aan het project ‘gent in 3D’ ben ik in aanraking gekomen met 3D-scanning. Deze methode wordt toegepast om bestaande situaties driehdimensionaal te fotograferen en resulteert in een puntenwolk, een ‘pointcloud’. Wereldwijd zijn er vele onderzoeks- en ontwikkelingsprojecten actief in de zoektocht naar een methode om deze pointclouds te vectoriseren, in een poging om deze modellen op hun beurt te kunnen integreren in het CAD process. Deze vorm van driehdimensionale vectorsaties is ongezinde complex, zij poogt een ruimtelijk chaos van punten om te zetten naar geometrie. Dit proces vereist interpretatie en filteren, wat op zich weer leidt tot verlies van informatie, ‘downsampling’. Mijn interpretatie van deze problematiek probeert een tegenovergesteld standpunt in te nemen. In plaats van puntenwolken te vectoriseren, kunnen vectormodellen ook gescand worden tot puntenwolken. Hoewel ontbrekkende informatie nooit uit het niets kan toegevoegd worden, is er bij deze puntenwolken mogelijkheid tot interpolatie en verfijning en kan er gestreden worden naar een vooropgestelde driehdimensionele resolutie. Bovendien hebben pointclouds nog een uitser sterker interessante eigenschap; zij kunnen gedeeltelijk ingelezen worden door de computer, door bvb enkel elk 10de of 100ste punt in te lezen kan een gedeeltelijke weergave, aangepast aan de gevraagde driehdimensionele resolutie bekomen worden. Dit is een pijnpunt bij vectormodellen waarbij het ontbreken van of slechts gedeeltelijke weergave van de geometrie leidt tot vervorming en onleesbaarheid.

In deze voorafbeelding wordt een preliminaire aanzet getoond van het creëren en manipuleren van puntenwolken. Aan de hand van een eenvoudig script kunnen in casu de 3 kleurkanalen uit een afbeelding gepresenteerd worden als driehdimensionale waarden. RGB wordt XYZ, 2D wordt 3D: een vorm van digitale holografie. Door de drie driehdimensionale kleurkanalen ruimtelijk te interpreteren wordt het manipuleren van driehdimensionale weergaven op een ongezine en eenvoudiger manier leesbaar. Elk individueel kleurnkaal wordt op deze manier een canvas in grijswaarden waarop eenvoudigweg driehdimensionaal getekend kan worden en resulteert onmiddellijk in een ruimtelijke weergave.

An VANDERVEKEN

“1969 (B)

1969: Female : 3 children : living together with Oscar Rommens Antwerpen (B).
1993: Graduated Interior Architect St Lukas Brussels - option scenography.
2012: student SASK – ceramics.

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“Botanical Scenography” as a working title for my personal research...

The investigation starts from the intrinsic fascination for “botanical features” (habitat, morphology, form/texture/colour and specifications of plants and composatory landscapes. The interference or applications of these diverse characteristics in (interior) architectural elements and their possible influence on landscaping within interior-design-context.

Can certain characteristics of botanical knowledge and specifications have a more direct influence on designing strategy, structures, perceptions and concrete forms and compositions for the creation of interior "scapes" and interior "atmospheres" in a specific urban context?

How can the characteristics of vegetation contribute to (interior) architectural design qualities or the perception of space as an upfront important tool within the design of interior spaces in dense urban area’s, where nature was banned out but starts to reintegrate or re-migrate for creating “liveable and breathable cities”?

The plants re-integration and migration in concrete urban situations creates urban “green” interiors within the city … not as a purely decorative and temporary asset but as an integrated architectural element of design in the complete build environment … can a contribution be found through investigating the knowledge/application/exploration of the interesting and fascinating characteristics of vegetation towards the design of interiors?

This first artefact is based upon the first steps of investigation/documentation/analysis and focuses as a first “theme” on the morphologies or compositions of the soil … appearing in layers in the landscape and responsible for which vegetation will be able to inhabit the place or location and will be able to inhabit the context – what is lying underneath/ underground of specific sites … and how can this knowledge of investigated layering and composed materials reflect in the upper world of perception or reappear in the enclosed environments that are build above?

Artifact under construction: Clay composition – glazed and coloured – photographic material - dimensions: Lenght: 150, Width: 200, Height: 150mm
I recurrently practice reset: I empty to that purpose a vast work floor, pushing as far as possible aside and into one or more piles the residue of former work, and then, from that emptied ground, start off again with often not much more than my body to start with. On that emptied floor, working with two times nothing, I allow for things to happen and talk back – a kind of back to basics and in my case a search for another level of practice in architecture with the drive to go beyond the built.

This recurrent reset – with its deliberate return to the emptied ground – shapes my current research. It also shaped amongst other things the way I have given form to a series of public creative encounters between artistic, applied and academic worlds over the subject of research by design and creation: BY DESIGN FOR DESIGN (BDFD). And how, in the course of BDFD, I have come to propose to the differencing professional worlds in their eventual search over common grounds, a more and more literal ground to share. One on which they can come together and work.

In a BDFD I ask participating designers as well as guest moderators and guests participants to crash test working hypotheses and together reverse engineer (read: reverse design) into research, the prefigurations of potential research outputs that they designed and made present in the form of artefacts: actions or small installations in media of their choice, put on display for the purpose. And to facilitate the necessary exchange and collaboration between the partakers I design the environment in which that reverse design of research can take place: the choice and the rearrangement of the space that hosts the encounter; the selection of guest participants; the choice of a designer in charge of the designed food interventions; the assignments that equally challenge regular and guest participants; the pace of the meeting and so on: the whole setting of a BDFD is intended to reflect the artefacts that reflect research and make us reflect about them better. The focal point of that setting is the set of displays designed and pre-arranged to receive the material with which the meeting works, the artefacts made by the participants.

The first two of these encounters (BDFD 1 in 2008, BDFD 2 in 2009, St-Lucas, Brussels) took place over the mirror-topped tables that I designed to literally mirror and reflect the whole of the people, designed artefacts and food interventions present – a reflection or mirroring of their reflections over research and design - and make them reflect, design and research better.
I then gradually brought some of my former ideas together: the idea of reflective tables (Marc Godts. BDFD, 2008) with the ideas I was developing at that time about the table as co creation, domesticated ground and shared midst (Carl Bourgeois, Corneel Cannaerts, Marc Godts, Michiel Helbig. THE TABLE: research project in progress. MMLAB, 2008-2010) with the earlier ideas I had practised about the table as board and war room inspired meetings of co creative surechère (Marc Godts, FLC extended. Top Meeting on Future References. 2000 and 2006). In BDFD 3 (Marc Godts, Tine Holvoet. 2010, Design Vlaanderen Galerie, Brussels), the smooth and slick, hard wired, smart mirroring THE TABLE-table (output of research mentioned above), capable of capturing and feeding back with a slight delay its own genesis and immediate environment, was put in contrast with a weight carrying, dumb, stand in the way board room meeting table, that I had collapsed for the purpose onto the floor and thus inverted – in a search to break down even further un- and outspoken protocols and barriers that exist in professional meetings and facilitate meeting and exchange.
With BDFD 0 (2011, Micromarché, Brussels), a zero or do it yourself version of the earlier BDFD 1, 2 and 3’s, I invited participants to shape for themselves the space of that same co creative meeting. The encounter started without a table in the sense that it started with a table of which I had blocked the meeting function as much as possible, redirecting participants to search for a shared midst of their own. As it happened a new table (one of game), created on the spot by the partakers, grew out of the material of encounter over research itself, and carried, at the end of the meeting, the encounter with the public.

Today I close a first cycle of sorts, as I want to keep the form and nature of the BY DESIGN FOR DESIGN co creative encounters over research, open for the future. The last two editions of that first cycle, BDFD X and BDFD XYZ (2012 and 2013, White Box, Bozar, Brussels) were as much in deconstruction as they were under construction. And with these last two encounters I deliberately shared some of the reset experience out of my practice and current research (mentioned above) by providing a vast and emptied floor and proposing partakers in BDFD to start from that.

Marc Godts.
DESIGNED PREFIGURINGS OF POTENTIAL OUTPUT OF POTENTIAL RESEARCH AND/OR
CREATION ON DISPLAY

With this assignment I trigger the powers that reside in the abilities that designers and artists have to speculate proactively about outcome before even a process starts. It is a way to incite designers and artists to approach research on their own ground. Designed for the purpose and produced in number, size and media of choice, each participant puts on display a form of artefact (object, action, short performance or small installation) to embody his/her intuition and imagination about a potential output of a potential research. Another good reason to work with output as a starting point to think about research is that output is by definition something to share, something for a public to access. BDFD is a workshop and an exhibition at the same time.
THIRD PERSON READINGS AND FIRST PERSON STATEMENTS

The designed artefacts prototype authentic experiences yet to come. They prefigure potential output of potential research and are as such supposed to stand on their own, be readable and speak. Putting these prefigurations of research output on display we then try to find out how they can be read, approached, perceived, interpreted, deciphered, understood and commented by a 3rd person. These screenings are then compared with the 1st person statements of the authors. The fact that not only the regular participants but also the special guests and myself too has one or more working hypotheses over research to crash test on display makes that in BDFD everyone meets on equal foot. And I want that meeting as much as possible to flow where it goes. There are no tables, no chairs, and as little use of walls as possible. I want the people of this BDFD to rediscover the floor as the first ground to share.
REVERSE ENGINEERING (READ REVERSE DESIGNING) OF RESEARCH BY DESIGN AND CREATION

The 3rd person readings and 1st person statements make a possible ground for all working hypotheses to update. With this update as input or extra layer, each working hypotheses is put back on the test bench. Groups go over each proposition in that group, change constellation and go over each proposition in that new group: taking the updated prefiguring of output as starting point: what research, what creative processes, what research environment and so on, could then lead to such output? BY DESIGN OR DESIGN is a co creative encounter where the imagination over research output is reverse designed into designs of research.
DESIGNED FOOD INTERVENTIONS KEEP US GOING

BDFD starts with a fine strong coffee in the morning and ends with closing drinks. Food interventions, designed by one of the special guests as working hypotheses of a research by cuisine, punctuate the meeting and keep us going.

BY DESIGN FOR DESIGN (BDFD)
Co creative encounters over research by creation. These encounters were initiated in 2008 against the framework of the Research Training Sessions (RTS) of Sint-Lucas Architectuur.

Initiator and artistic director of BDFD: Marc Godts.

BDFD X
Participating designer: architect Geert Peymen
Contributing designers: architects Gisèle Gantois and Nina Taghavi
Special guest participant: art critic and independent curator Sven Vanderstichelen.

BDFD XYZ
Participating designers: visual artist Mariken Dumon, architects Bert Joostens, Pieter-Jan Sedeyn, Klaas Vanslembrouck and Edwin Lestaeghe and interior architects Anita Nevens and An Vanderveken.
Special guests participants: art critic and independent curator Sven Vanderstichelen and visual artist Ermias Kifleyesus.
Designed Food Interventions: star sparkled chef David Martin, Bozar Brasserie Brussels.
Reporters: Ben Robberechts and Gudrun De Maeyer, ARC Architectuur Reflectie Centrum.
Observer: Anneleen Van der Veken, Coördination Research, LUCA Campus Sint-Lucas Architectuur.

Photo Credits:

1: Sven Vanderstichelen.
2, 3, 4, 6, 16, 17 and following: Ben Robberechts.
5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15: Marc Godts.
9: Wouter Cox.
Captions:

7. Marc Godts, 2010. The boardroom meeting table as found, before collapsing it into the Dumb Table for BDFD 3. Design Vlaanderen Galerie, Brussels.
17-46. Marc Godts, 2013. BDFD XYZ participants and special guest engaged in displaying, reading and reverse engineering of prefigured research outputs. White Box, Bozar, Brussels.

For other documentation on BY DESIGN FOR DESIGN see: REFLECTIONS#9, 2009, pp. 80–125 (BDFD1) / REFLECTIONS#13, 2010, pp. 136-185 (BDFD2) / REFLECTIONS#14, 2011, 6 pp. (BDFD3).
Metarbitrariness? extracts

E-mail to Gudrun De Maeyer, 22/01/2013

Dag Gudrun,

Ik stel voor om in plaats van iets te schrijven gebaseerd op mijn PhD(*), eerder een goed gekozen uitlek aan te bieden. De bedoeling ervan is dat het iets vertelt over wat er binnen zo'n PhD gebeurt, wat de inhoudelijke kant van de PhD is, en wat het resultaat was... een soort teaser. Ik denk dat het voor de lezers interessant kan zijn om rechtstreeks in contact te zijn met “het object”.

Dear Gudrun,

Instead of writing something based upon my PhD (*), I’d rather propose a well-chosen extract from it. The intention is that this subset of pages tells something about what is ongoing inside such a PhD, gives a glimpse of its actual content, and what the result was. A kind of teaser. I think that it will be interesting for the readers to be directly confronted to “the object”.

(*) The PhD “Metarbitrariness” was examined on Friday 26th of November 2012.

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*AgwA: a practice of architecture - an architecture of practice*

**EXHIBITION**

42 Nov 2012 > 20 Jan 2013

CIVA - Les Moulins - 69 B Flagey - Bruxelles - www.civa.be
Metarbitrariness?

Book 1

2012

RMIT

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practice as a deconstructed reality, and SMLXL as a mirror of the practice

This book might be a tentative of re-assembling, in search of coherence

In both cases, the lack of cement between bricks as a fundamental condition
“AgwA was founded in 2003, two years after the partner's graduation. This is particularly meaningful, because it means that the partners did not undergo a strong training period at a Master's office. We found ourselves almost immediately projected in the arbitrary* realm of a deconstructed field**, with no Master to follow, but instead, a vast amount of masters to look at. As a consequence, through our projects, we are in a process of definition of an attitude in the field of architectural practice.”

* arbitrary : the apparently infinite expansion conceptual and constructive possibilities suggest that everything is possible, and consequently equivalent. Choice is subjected to arbitrariness.

** deconstructed : Louis Etienne Boullée broke the classical Vitruvian Trilogy. Styles and approaches multiplied exponentially. Even the profession is fragmented through the growing importance of engineers, designers and consultants of all kinds.

“Four study cases on skins and structures”, Harold Fallon, ICSA, Universidade do Minho, Guimarães, 2010
Between 2003 and 2012, the practice and the understanding thereof evolved significantly. The practice challenged itself continuously. Where should I start? With the operational concepts at work in the projects? With a sketch of the global frameworks of understanding of the practice? With simple, neutral explicitation of the projects? With the explicitation of key moments and documents, which shifted the practice? With the exploration of the community of practice?

To follow one unique path through the practice and its evolution, starting in one point, and ending in another point, seems to be an almost impossible task, as I pointed in the fragment about Ponge and the multiple agenda’s of practice. There is not one unique narrative, one linear pursuit, but a field of overlapping concerns. Instead, there is a interwoven multiplicity of stories covering the practice, its reality, its ambitions, its interpretation, its evolution, its relationships to a community of practice.

We would need a chart allowing the reader to travel through the practice following these multiple tracks, and perhaps to discover new ones. The chart could work like a flexible, non-linear table of contents, that can be navigated following different tracks.

Referring to the ambition of the practice itself, it would be a chart overcoming the arbitrariness of telling one narrative while hiding other ones.

"Other maps are such shapes, with their islands and capes! But we've got our brave Captain to thank (So the crew would protest) that he's brought us the best-- A perfect and absolute blank!"

Bellman's Chart in "The Hunting of the Snark", Lewis Carroll, 1876
source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hunting_of_the_Snark
Gerhard Richter’s Atlas is a mere chronological juxtaposition of photographs, drawings and diagrams he has compiled or created over 40 years. They are a continuous flow of images and references that fed the artist. It is an infinite work in progress. Archeological in form, it simply has the ambition to exist, to show what is there. There is no ambition to support any kind of discourse, except its existence as a possibly coherent universe.
Art historian Aby Warburg organized his library not alphabetically nor by subject. His books were grouped by ‘elective affinities’, a subjective feeling of coherence. In the last years of his life, he developed a project called “Mnemosyne Atlas” which aimed to make visible relationships between Renaissance art and the productions from the following centuries. These collections of images, pinned on black panels, were constantly rearranged and modified. It became an universe in perpetual transformation.

However, this continuous modification was probably not perceived as an inherent feature. He was probably looking for a perfect, definitive arrangement, but each time a configuration was actualized, it was contradictory to other even meaningful arrangements, and consequently could not fit as a conclusive panel or even tend towards stabilization.

Could he have imagined a way of displaying the images and documents in order to make various specific narratives explicit at the same time, avoiding the issue of partiality of each narrative?
In “A Beautiful Mind”, mathematician John Nash works to discover and extract hidden patterns and narratives out of almost infinite sets of documents.

Dr. Rosen: You can’t reason your way out of this!
Nash: Why not? Why can’t I?
Dr. Rosen: Because your mind is where the problem is in the first place!

There is no point to search obsessionally for one impossible hidden truth, when reality is a complex weaving of intermingled and (un)contradictory narratives. There is no need to look for an exhaustively global equation. Instead, we can organize the coexistence of things in order to make the multiplicity of local coherences visible.
“Different praxemes (1) were discovered inside the practice (AgwA): metaphorical specificity, generic systems, material language, contextual autonomy, and the flexible identification of structure and architecture.

The interpretation of the relationships between these themes went through successive phases: heterogeneity model, dual model, open additive layering, and retroactive layering.

These themes are all located inside the practice of architecture. This way of doing has some affinities with the work of french poet Francis Ponge, whose texts, while sticking strictly to their objects, contain implicit literary and metaphysical agendas.

The research ends with an exhibition, which is conceived as a navigation chart of the practice, that supports simultaneously different narratives: the discovery of the key moments of transformation of the practice, the analysis of the working of the themes, the changing interpretation of the meaning of the relationships between themes, the neutral documentation of the projects, the context of community of practice, etc.”

(1) I do not remember where I was confronted with the locution “Praxeme”. It is a contraction of “praxis” (action) and “semeion” (sense, meaning). I use it to refer to a piece of knowledge that cannot be considered independently from the practice. It is distilled from the practice and informs the practice.
The navigation chart is based on 6 key projects from the period running from 2003 to 2012. These projects were not “chosen” a priori, but appeared as the research went on, as they corresponded to the recognition of methods, issues, praxemes and fundamental shifts in the practice of the office. Retrospectively, they also are important projects for the development of the office, through their scale, clients and programs.

So, the chart embodies the metanarrative of the PhD. It explicits the layering of concerns of the practice and the practice itself simultaneously. Also, the way the chart is structured is an application of the praxemes of the practice, and it attempts to avoid the issue of arbitrariness in the narrative.

Philippeville and Fort VI are lost competitions. The Vertigo was already built when the research began, and Metal was nearing completion. The Carré des Arts was won by the start of the research and is an ongoing project. In 2012, due to budgetary restriction, the typology of the project is completely changed and we are currently re-developping an alternative project for the same place. Péronnes was won in 2010 and has been developed during the course of the research. The start of the works is planned for 2013.
The six projects are displayed in a navigation chart, following the typology of a grid.

ROWS

The six rows are devoted to the six key projects. Other projects might appear in the future or in the past, adding new rows. These projects correspond to the discoveries of specific praxemes or “ways of designing”. They also correspond to shifts in the understanding of the framework organizing the relationships between projects and praxemes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>project</th>
<th>Praxeme</th>
<th>Framework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Vertigo</td>
<td>Metaphorical Specificity</td>
<td>Heterogeneity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Metal</td>
<td>Flexible structural principles</td>
<td>Stepping Back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Philippeville</td>
<td>Spatial Genericity</td>
<td>Duality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Carré des Arts</td>
<td>Coincidence of Structure and Architecture</td>
<td>Pairing Back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Péronnes</td>
<td>Materiality as a Language</td>
<td>Open Additive Layeredness</td>
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<tr>
<td>F. Fort VI</td>
<td>Contextual Autonomy</td>
<td>Retroactive Layeredness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COLUMNS

A first group of columns contains analyses of the discovered praxemes.
A second group documents the projects according to the dimensions addressed by these praxemes.
A last column contains considerations and shifts on the level of the framework.

1. Praxeme : Explicitation of the discovered praxeme
2. Discovery process : the design process that led to the explicitation of a praxeme
3. Community : Comments and reflections about references, grouped around praxemes
4. Praxeme analyse : Analyse of the specific application of praxeme inside the project
5. Proliferation : Relationships and correspondence with other projects
6. Scale models
7. Concepts : relationships with Metaphorical Specificity
8. Plans : relationships with Spatial Genericity
9. Context (autonomy)
10. Structure (Flexible Principles, Coincidence)
11. Materiality (Materiality as a language)
12. Frameworks : interlinking of the praxemes and processes in the practice

The chart itself is an echo of the practice.
It is a simple spatial structure enabling a rich variety of possibilities
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. praxemes</th>
<th>2. discovery process</th>
<th>3. community</th>
<th>4. praxeme analyse</th>
<th>5. resonance</th>
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<tr>
<td>A. metaphorical specificity</td>
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<td>B. structure: flexible principles</td>
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<td>C. spatial genericity</td>
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<td>D. structure &amp; architecture: coincidence</td>
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<td>E. language through materiality</td>
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<td>F. contextual autonomy</td>
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Implicit Distances

From Aldo Van Eyck's attention to thresholds\(^1\), Milos Bobic's idea of urban interfaces\(^2\), to Gordon Matta-Clark's sliced territories\(^3\) or Peter Rowe's Middle Landscape\(^4\), in-between spaces have been an important topic in architectural or urban debates. In many cases, intermediate spaces are presented as *de facto* interesting spaces, as if they automatically guarantee urban qualities, without unveiling the reasons for it. In other discourses, they are approached as blurry intermittent spaces, defined as grey zones (the semi-public, semi-private approach), as unsharp areas, sandwiched in between more important or more easily definable spaces. Apart from the possible qualities in-between spaces may obtain, the main focus should be however on the way these spaces are defined, by seeing them as part of a bigger system of adjacent spaces and programs.

The Streetscape Territories Research Project\(^5\) tries to explore this subject by analysing or designing a series of urban projects and by trying to explore the ways these projects, and their constituting in-between spaces, relate to the street as part of a depth configuration. This research project studies how these buildings, properties, streets or areas are organised territorially and how they define contemporary streetscapes in multiple ways.

In-between

In “Territory without a model” Manuel de Solà-Morales described an alternative approach to the meaning of places, next to the traditional concept of “genius loci”: he referred to “the expected sensation of voids and the indifference of its constructions”\(^6\). According to the author, the organising principles of contemporary urban fabric, especially the ones defining its periphery, are no more tactics of composition,

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1 F. Strauven, “Aldo Van Eyck: Shaping the New Reality form the In-between to the Aesthetics of Number”, Study Centre, Mellon Lectures, CCA, 2007
2 M. Bobic, “Between the Edges”, Toth Publishers Bussum, 2004
5 Streetscape Territories is an international research project that deals with the way buildings are related to streets. The project focuses on the territorial organization of urban projects, explored in different contexts, studied as part of different cultures and defined by different social networks. Streetscape Territories deals with models of proximity within a street, neighborhood or region and starts from the assumption that urban space, from the domestic scale till the scale of the city, can be understood as a discontinuous collective space, containing different levels of collective use that are defined by multiple physical, cultural or territorial boundaries. See www.streetscapeterritories.wordpress.com
6 M. de Solà-Morales, “Territoris Sense Model” article in Papers, Regió Metropolitana de Barcelona, nº 26, Barcelona, 1997, p 21-27
repetition and differences but “systems of relative distances”. He mentioned that the dialogue between a building and its surrounding became more singular but at the same time obtained a more abstract dimension, as in-between distances belong to an increasingly complex matrix, an urban system of distances that can be understood as a non-absolute configuration, like communicating vessels, where one intervention implies immediate consequences for other parts of that same configuration. de Sola-Morales argued that the distance between areas or autonomous packages defines the way our built environment is constructed or transformed: our daily experiences are increasingly defined by sets of minimal or maximum distances. More important than the property itself became the distance between properties, between properties and natural resources, between properties and infrastructures, between properties and high employment areas. Instead of zoning or defining density, sets of rules of relative distances are configured, that in suburban conditions might be different as in downtown areas. In a way, time and distance is defined and measured systematically within the contemporary landscape, allowing a needed comparison with other spatial configurations.

“...the space in between things, between objects and subjects next to one another, between my house and my neighbour’s, between their office and mine, is traversed by many strangers, and it is not a meeting place; it has become empty because it plays no recognisable role; this space is only required to be permeable, and should be traversed with as little friction as possible.”

Similarly, Bernardo Secchi detected a change in the nature of the built environment: “Every intervention implies immediate consequences for other parts of that same configuration.”

How we define these territorial distances however is the major concern.

Increasing mobility as a result of the mentioned specialisation and segregation, a growing separation between work and leisure together with an externalisation of domestic tasks, and higher economic, technological, environmental or administrative demands all result in higher social pressure, hence the increasing need to separate or isolate territories. In-between space became one of the main structural elements in the way we build homes, streets, neighbourhoods or regions. How we define these territorial distances however is the major concern.

**Explicit versus implicit**

An interesting paradox appears in the discourse of delimiting territories in urban fabrics: being part of this abstract, indifferent, generic and matrix-like field of relative distances, an increasing number of urban projects simultaneously obtained a more “figurative” or less abstract dimension. Analysis of recent urban projects, from the domestic scale till the scale of the neighbourhood, indeed shows an increasing explicitness of boundary delimitation and sharper definition of these sets of distances. The more the built environment turns into a not-so-site-specific system of relative distances, the more space is produced in a more explicit way, easier to read, leaving no doubt of how to interpret the very system.

As part of the Streetscapes Territories research project, a series of urban projects is analysed, as mentioned before. The results show cases of configured aggregated territories, based on systematic separation by applying deliberate gaps or intervals in the lay-out, as well as projects that rely on spaces that each have rather high integrated values within the depth configuration, making use of overlap

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7 M. de Sola-Morales, “Territoris Sense Model” article in Papers, Regió Metropolitana de Barcelona, nº 26, Barcelona, 1997, p 21-27

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10 High integration value within a depth configuration refers to the very position a space has in a depth configuration. If we count the number of spaces we must pass through to go from the space
scenarios. Both implicit as explicit boundary delimitation occurs in these urban projects, even if the last phenomenon seems to be dominating: most of the built projects seem to increasingly apply explicit boundary delimitation, avoiding a free appropriation by its users and embracing a no-risk policy when referring to privacy or security.

In this case, depth is defined by a high level of physical depth, combined with an even higher level of visual depth as the project shows many long sight lines, criss-crossing areas with a collective as well as an individual use. On the level of publicness and privateness of spaces within the territorial configuration, accessibility distribution shows a coherent and complex diagram that was the starting point of the design process, not considered a detail to solve later in the process. The general depth diagram shows a well orchestrated and controlled territorial transition from the street as a public area till arriving in the most private part of the building. However, sets of sequential gaps and various overlap scenarios within the sequence increase the complexity of the depth configuration. Various territorial gates are introduced to plan the sequence gradually. The detailed depth diagram, from the corridor till the sleeping room, shows a similar pattern: a relatively high proportion of collective spaces, carefully broken down following a regular rhythm and showing multiple access possibilities. Territorial configuration is complex and coherent and adds an important value to the rich architectonic experience of the building.\(^1\)

It is the very combination of territorial boundaries, spacing mechanisms or sequential gaps, overlap scenarios and a wide range of ways of delimitating territories that defines the depth configuration and stresses the qualitative characteristics of this studied project. In this built cluster complex, besides designing groups of spaces or the simple sharing of facilities, collective spaces have a high integration value and allow infinite possibilities of moving through a building, of appropriating space, of meeting people. This case study illustrates potential qualities of in-between spaces by considering them as part of a broader collective strategy and the non dependence explicit boundary definition of those in-between spaces.

with a higher integration value to all other spaces, we find that it comes to a total which is less than for any other space, that is, it has less depth than any other space in the complex. The general form of this measure is called integration, and can be applied to any space in any configuration: the less depth from the complex as a whole, the more integrating the space, and vice versa. This means that every space in the different examples can be assigned an “integration value”.

11 see also F. Strauven: “Aldo Van Eyck: Shaping the New Reality form the In-between to the Aesthetics of Number”, Study Centre, Mellon Lectures, CCA, 2007
Another case study, showing a different use of in-between spaces, is a well-published residential project by Eduard François in Louviers, called La Closeirai (France, 2005): it is often praised for its flexibility and use of a permeable interface. In this project, the architect however defines a rather non-negotiable way of using space: a clearly hierarchical configuration of territories allows the architect to decide which spaces needed to be separated from each other and which ones could be shared by overlapping the indoor as well as the outdoor spaces. It is important to say that, even if there are overlap scenarios, they are explicitly (pre) defined (see figures) which does not allow an open interpretation by its users as was the case in the Aldo Van Eyck's project. In this project, in-between spaces become spaces to separate instead of to integrate and the architect looked for a non-risk scenario to achieve clarity in the project. The spaces in between the different built volumes seem to be minimum distances needed to provide privacy, setbacks from the neighbour's life. We could say that this project is more about material transparency than about territorial permeability and complexity.

During the end of the twentieth century, this “figurative” way of working became very common in architectural projects, at the scale of the residential cluster, but as well at a slightly bigger scale. The implicit, that is the possibility to read and use space in a more open or suggestive way, is increasingly avoided, at all scales: systematic use of the aggregation model at the scale of the property leads toward a similar result at the scale of a region: explicitly defined boundaries constitute a generic system of relative distances.
Dealing implicitly with in-between spaces at a bigger scale, Bruno De Meulder described in “Old Dispersions and Scenes for the Production of Public Space: the Constructive margins of Secondarity” the underlying logic of an “unbroken urbanscape” in Belgium: an isotropic universal accessibility model defined one of the densest area in Europe, an area based on home ownership. “Conventional wisdom condemns (the) “secondarity” as a burden, as it does not allow economies of scale, and nor does it generate the synergies that concentration and accumulation allow. Because it remains dispersed, incremental and unconsolidated, it does not create any significant public space, nor an established (hegemonic) order. (...) The absence of rules and norms, generates an ambiguous space. It creates an open city, an embryonic territorial constellation that always remains receptive. Its continuously reproduced undefinedness renders permanent its character of wasteland, a terrain whose potentiality is not consumed”

Figure 3: Streetscape Territories: Louviers case study: situation, plans and sections, scheme of territorial transition on different levels, scheme of “relative distances” within project.


The author proposed re-editing and re-inserting informal social spaces in areas of wasted land, like sequential gaps, trying to redefine residual spaces and to consider urban voids as acceptable and structural elements of territorial organisation. The used notion of “secondarity” in the study refers to a traditional hierarchical set up of territories while the modus operandi seems to be responding to different

characteristics of the urban environment. The presented study looks for the new relationships between open public or collective spaces and more dense areas at a regional scale. De Meulder concluded that urban fabric, a result of rather ad hoc and unconsidered infill, construction, demolition and reconstruction, leads to a large variety of open spaces or sequential gaps with very different relationships to the private constructions. Apparently, he mentioned, this unordered, chaotic juxtaposition of open spaces – part of sets of relative distances, could be argued – offers on the one hand “all conceivable gradients between public and private space, and on the other hand opens up a register of spaces ranging from extremely exposed to intimate”\textsuperscript{13}. The author continued by stating that re-editing would allow the articulation and exploitation of this richness of open-space qualities as what is conventionally only seen as residual space. In other words, this statement means a full acknowledgement of voids, in-between-spaces and sequential gaps as structural and not residual parts of urban configurations but above all, confirms the idea that there is a need to empower the informal, implicit and not-pre-defined use of space, as a counterweight to the growing explicitness of how the built environment is organized and used.

Implicit distances

In-between spaces, sequential gaps, voids or intermediate spaces should not be considered abstract spaces, even if they belong to a more abstract broader system of relative distances. In-between spaces are not empty, should not necessarily be considered as in-between terrain vagues\textsuperscript{14} or undefined spaces: the separation or integration they embody has a highly practical and immediate consequence for its users. The value and meaning of in-between spaces depend on the position they have in a broader setting, the one of a depth configuration, and the way we delimit those spaces. In-between spaces could become hollow containers if they exclusively depend on their explicit definition, a tactic that seems to have become a common way of dealing with urban space. However, if we approach in-between spaces as spaces that are able to contain implicitly defined collective levels of activity, they will become structural parts of the mentioned depth configurations. There is an urgent need to allow the occasional use of implicit boundaries, defining implicit distances in a contemporary urban context that would be based on trust, more than on fear.

Kris W. B. Scheerlinck

\textsuperscript{13} B. De Meulder,”Old Dispersions and scenes for the Production of Public Space” in Architectural Design, Cities of Dispersal (edited by Els Verbakel/Raf Segal), 2008, p 30

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