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Preface

Broad cultural depth in a ‘Fragile’ environment
In this fifth edition of ‘Reflections’ on RTS (the Sint-Lucas Research Training Sessions), a broad range of different research interests are once again dealt with, each from a distinctly different angle. A selection of contributions from the growing number of RTS participants is presented here.

Each author makes his or her own discoveries in the course of a carefully studied journey. Each one invites the readers not only to see, but also to search for that which lies hidden underneath – and even to pursue the matter and make their own discoveries. Thus the feedback loops running through the different editions of Reflections are starting to interact and produce changing responses over time. The research climate at Sint-Lucas is based on openness to the mental models of others.

Guaranteeing this openness is also what we aim at by introducing ‘Fragile’ as a lens through which all the different issues and problems presented and elaborated upon in the school can be viewed.

Hence ‘Fragile’ 2010-2011 is becoming something like a central concern underpinning and driving all theoretical and design production at Sint-Lucas, including research.

‘Fragile’ manifests itself intuitively as the general, overarching quality or question in the light of which both the studio itself and the theoretical answers it produces are examined.

The aim of the ‘Fragile’ International Student Conference in April 2011 is to bring together students and young academics from all over Europe and the world to reflect on how space and architecture are putting the people back into the centre of their disciplines. These students and young academics are the ones who are destined to become the influential thinkers of the future.

Both RTS and ‘Fragile’ are creating a renewed climate of reflection, inside and outside Sint-Lucas.

I want to thank all the people who have been involved in and supported RTS and this edition of Reflections for their energy and efforts.
introduction
Research by Designing Policy

The department trains designers1 in a spirit of critical reflection. They explore both their own limits and the limits of the discipline. The department organizes the educational and research programs in a spirit of artistic and intellectual openness, in a spirit of tolerance and inclusion.2

Within the central activity of design, it is of special importance that the research should explore the limits (both in terms of content and in terms of research methodology) and open up new horizons.

The personnel’s actions flow out of a team spirit based on individual competences and mutual complementarity.2 This principle is also carried through to the domain of design research.

The relationship with the professional world is structurally anchored in the training programs: via the demand for exemplary practice for a large part of the teaching staff, and via the juries with external experts (cf. the Departmental Policy Statement). Consequently, for research by designing it is self-evident that exemplary practice plays an essential role (whether as source of content or as specific research methodology). It is by means of this that a specific ‘Culture of Knowledge’ comes into being that is characteristic, on the one hand, of the domain and, on the other hand, of the history and specific identity of Sint-Lucas.

In the development of the PhD program specific for the domain, the following aspects can serve as stimulating inspiration to strive for the highest level of quality and to open up new horizons.

- The research project is meaningful and relevant for the discipline and the practice; it explores its limits and expands them.
- The research results are consistent with the experience in practice, and they require intellectual work that is characteristic for the discipline.
- The research endeavors to make the processes and the presumptions as clear and explicit as possible.
- The research process and the research results are understandable for peers.
- The research results are communicated externally and are submitted to regular peer review; in this way they refer to the context and the work of peers.
- The research contributes to the design practice, the exploration of ‘spatial understanding’ and/or the creative design process.
- The research explores paths that enquire into the emotional, intuitive and/or artistic aspects of the domain.
- The research contributes to knowledge in the broadest sense of the word.

1 If ‘artists’ is inserted here and in a few other places, this text can also apply for artistic research, and thus for the Arts and Product Design.

2 Cf. Departmental Policy Statement
Onderzoeksbeleid Ontwerpen

Het departement leidt ontwerpers3 op in een geest van kritische reflectie. Zij verkennen hun eigen grenzen én degrenzen van de discipline. Het departement organiseert het onderwijs en het onderzoek in een geest van artistieke en intellectuele openheid, in een geest van tolerantie en inclusie4.

Binnen het kerngebied van het ontwerpen is het van bijzonder belang dat ook het onderzoek de grenzen aftast (zowel inhoudelijk als qua onderzoeksmethode) en grensverleggend is.

Het personeel treedt op in een teamgeest gebaseerd op individuele competenties en onderlinge complementariteit. Voor het domein van het ontwerponderzoek wordt dit doorgetrokken.

De relatie met de professionele wereld is structureel verankerd in de opleidingen: langs de eis van voorbeeldige praktijk voor een groot deel van het onderwijzend personeel, langs de jury’s met externe experts (cfr. beleidsverklaring departement). Voor het ontwerp onderzoek is het bijgevolg evident dat de voorbeeldige praktijk een essentiële rol speelt (hetzij als inhoudelijke voeding, hetzij als specifieke onderzoeksmethode). Hierdoor ontstaat een specifieke ‘Culture of Knowledge’ die eigen is aan enerzijds het domein en anderzijds de historiek en eigenheid van Sint-Lucas.

Bij de ontwikkeling van het doctoraat eigen aan het domein kunnen volgende aspecten stimulerend zijn als inspiratie en om de hoogste kwaliteit na te streven en grensverleggend te zijn:

- Het onderzoek is betekenisvol en relevant voor de discipline en de praktijk; het verkent haar grenzen en breidt haar uit;
- De onderzoeksresultaten zijn consistend met de praktijkervaring en versterken intellectueel werk eigen aan de discipline;
- Het onderzoek probeert processen en onderbouwingen zo duidelijk mogelijk te expliciteren;
- Het onderzoeksproces en de onderzoeksresultaten zijn begrijpbaar voor ‘peers’;
- De onderzoeksresultaten worden extern gecommuniceerd en onderworpen aan regelmatige peer-review; op die wijze refereert het naar context en werk van ‘peers’;
- Het onderzoek draagt bij aan de ontwerppraktijk, het verdiepen van ‘spatial understanding’ en/of het creatief ontwerpproces;
- Het onderzoek verkent paden die het emotionele, intuitieve en/of artistieke van het domein bevragen;
- Het onderzoek levert een bijdrage aan de kennis in de meest ruime betekenis van het woord.

3 Mits invoegen van ‘kunstenaars’ hier en op enkele andere plaatsen kan deze tekst ook gelden voor het artistiek onderzoek en dus de Kunsten en Product Design.
4 Cfr. beleidsverklaring departement.
tutors

contributions

tutors
The objective of this article is to sketch a picture of how Research by Design in architecture and design has emerged and developed, with a special focus on developments in the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Belgium. Thus this article is an attempt to position the “Belgian scene”, as represented by the Sint-Lucas School of Architecture, within a broader picture of other European national scenes. In our earlier contributions to the Reflections + series we addressed some seminal ideas concerning so-called “post-academic science” and the positioning of design thinking within these ideas.

In these articles, we highlighted some important texts that have been crucial for the development of Research by Design in architecture and design, and we established links to philosophical and epistemological positions that have been important in this regard. We discussed the relationships of these positions to developments in design theory that are of importance to architecture, and we pointed out certain architectural approaches in practice and in education that have integrated this research and the resulting strategies for knowledge production.

The discussion on “post-academic science” and Mode-2 research have launched new developments in research in the professional fields of architecture and design. A new conceptualisation of the fields of knowledge, together with a more inclusive model of research, is emerging, in which a more practice-based approach is possible. This new model is on the point of achieving academic recognition, as well as gaining significant interest among practitioners (Dunin-Woyseth & Nilsson, 2008).

For our earlier historical reviews, an important statement by John Walker was momentous:

“Although various histories exist, this does not mean that there is more than one material reality – as many worlds as there are individuals. One difficulty all historians experience is that the past can never be reconstructed in its totality and completeness; every history is, therefore, a partial or simplified representation of a past situation. Selection is inevitable in history-writing. Histories differ not only because scholars tackle different facts of design but also because one historian will select and emphasize certain facts and events while another will select and emphasize different facts and events ... An analogy with map-making may be helpful: several maps do not contradict one another, instead they complement one another. Taken together they provide a more complete account of the terrain than taken singly”. (Walker 1989:2-3)
While the previous articles were focused on the epistemological contents of the development of Research by Design, the focus of this short article is directed towards a parallel development of Research by Design as represented by concrete activities and events concerning Research by Design in practice and academia, as they had been noted in different European countries, with emphasis on the Belgium scene and the Sint-Lucas School of Architecture

The core concept of this article was inspired by another statement by John A. Walker about constituting new disciplines:

“The awareness that a distinct discipline exists occurs when a sufficient number of practitioners become self-conscious about their activities and begin to join together to discuss common problems and interests. It is usually at this critical point that a professional organization is formed. … Once an organization exists, the trappings of an academic discipline soon follow: elected officers, a newsletter, a scholarly journal, an annual conference”.

We do not perceive Walker’s use of the utterance “trappings” in a derogatory sense, since we regard Research by Design not as a discipline sensu stricto, but as a field-specific research approach that is on its way to becoming a recognized approach to studies in architecture and urban design.

Four national scenes will be briefly introduced as examples of how new approaches have been represented by various practice and scholarly-related activities. We shall pay attention to how certain arenas in these countries have responded to the issue of Research by Design. These arenas, corresponding with Walker’s criteria for building fields of inquiry, are: innovative architectural and urban design practices, research conferences, design research journals, books, innovative education of designers, doctoral research and research networks. One result of addressing these arenas can be that a consistent and homogeneous ‘entity’ will not emerge from these studies, but rather that a set of cultural practices pursued by certain groups of designers and design intellectuals will become more “visible” as a broader process of establishing Research by Design as a legitimate field-specific research development parallel to the traditional, academically embedded design research.

The Dutch Scene
Some years ago in the Netherlands we noted a pioneering, innovative, explorative architectural practice that often recognized itself as research-based (Lotsmaa, 1999, 2001; Sigler and van Toorn, 2003, Koolhas, 1995, Maas, 1998; 1999). Some years later, scholarly endeavours of the various schools of architecture in the Netherlands were supporting this development. As in other European countries, the insistence of a prestigious academic institution like Delft University of Technology led to the scholarly legitimization of this development of Research by Design in the field of architecture and design.

One of the means of legitimization included the conceptualization of Research by Design. The Faculty of Architecture at Delft University of Technology launched a research project in 1998 called “The Architectural Intervention”, which was intended to shed light on, develop, and operationalise design research as a method of scientific research (Nieuwenhuis & Ouwerkerk, 2000). One of the major outputs of this project was an international conference called “Research by Design” held in Delft in 2000. This conference can be regarded as a milestone as it discussed in a broad international forum the notions of scientific research, design, and Research by Design.

A major publication of the Delft School of Architecture and a collective work of its staff, “Ways of Study and Research. Urban, Architectural and Technical Design” elucidated these notions, proposing the conceptualisation of Research by Design with regard to other kinds of design research (de Jong & van der Voordt, 2002). The Berlage Institute in Rotterdam founded and publishes the journal Hunch, which features debate on various aspects of architectural culture, research and criticism. Among other issues, the journal has featured student and doctoral projects that apply architectural design tools in the study of knowledge fields and disciplines close to architecture and urbanism, and articles that discuss the architectural discipline in relation to research and transdisciplinarity (Linder, 2005).

The Norwegian Scene
The Norwegian scene is represented by the case of one institution, the Oslo School of Architecture and Design, where research by design originated and developed in its doctoral programme. The programme was at first offered to architects only, but professionals from other fields, such as landscape architecture, object design, visual arts, interaction design and design education, have come to constitute the doctoral students in more recent years. The Oslo doctoral programme has functioned as prime mover and hub within the research education system called Norway Network (Norgesnettet) since it in 1995 opened up the programme for applicants from the so-called “making” professions, i.e. those who have had their background in creative practice and have based their research in issues close to their practice.

The 20-year-long process of development started from academically based doctoral research, which has slowly come to include concepts of more explorative architectural and design research, also encompassing Research by Design.

The Oslo School of Architecture has taken the initiative to a number of different Nordic doctoral courses and they were held at various Nordic institutions of higher education in architecture and design. This has led to the building of a common platform for exploring possibilities of a more field-specific concept of design research and design research education. Especially the Nordic “Millennium Programme” (1999-2001), which brought together more than 50 Scandinavian doctoral students,
led to new insights in what is today called “post-academic science” and how design research could be an important contributor to these new developments in knowledge production.

The first doctoral project based on Research by Design resulted in the awarding of a doctoral degree in 2005 (Sevaldson, 2005). This long period of development has been documented in the school’s academic journal Research Magazine and elsewhere (Dunin-Woyseth, 2008). This journal has documented the architectural / design milieu’s growing awareness of the expanded understanding of design research. In 2008 a total of 18 PhD students were enrolled at the school. Since then, a group within those enroled have chosen to base their doctoral projects in various concepts of Research by Design. Masters courses exploring Research by Design have been offered at the school since 2007, some of them led by the doctoral students themselves. A new, alumni-based Nordic peer-reviewed journal, FORMakademisk, has been documenting the growing field of Research by Design, with its last issue being entirely devoted to the topic (Sevaldson and Morrison, 2010).

The Swedish Scene

Already in the 1990s – both at the doctoral and senior research levels – there was noticeable growth in the numbers and range of research projects that could be characterised as practice-based or “by design”. But various debates on the issue go back to the 1970s. For example, “artistic development projects” were then on the agenda at the Swedish universities, but they were regarded as an activity parallel to, and not of the same status as academic research. These discussions also involved the architectural milieus, as architecture has long been affected by (and adopted) theories and methods from other academic disciplines. At that time they wanted to develop more field-specific knowledge modes in architecture

As early as 1987 the Association for Architectural Research was founded and it soon became a Nordic association and initiated publishing of the academic peer-reviewed periodical, Nordic Journal of Architectural Research.

The three Swedish schools of architecture have a long tradition of architectural research, but until several years ago, their approach consisted mainly of integrating different theoretical and methodological tools from other academically established disciplines into their research. The latest decennium has, nonetheless, brought about several doctoral projects that have clearly included elements of creative practice as their means of inquiry (Grillner, 2000; Zimm, 2005; Akner-Koler, 2007; Runberger, 2008).

The Swedish National Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet) supported the establishment of the AKAD (Academy for Practice-Based Research in Architecture and Design) in 2003. The three schools of architecture, the School of Architecture at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, the School of Architecture at Lund University of Technology, and the School of Architecture at Chalmers University of Technology in Gothenburg, together formed a network of collaboration. The main objective of their endeavours was to validate the architectural design project as the generative factor in research projects.

All the schools participating in the AKAD have developed experimental approaches. The integration of the design studio with architectural research has had a long tradition at Chalmers (Dyrrsen, Rehal & Strid, 2009). A research project entitled “Explorative Architecture”, also attached to Chalmers, involved architects, landscape architects, and philosophers, who together proposed certain conceptualisations of the field (Gromark & Nilsson, 2006). These collective endeavours of the school milieu made it possible to organise the Nordic conference “Architectural Inquiries” in 2008, an event which focused on contemporary theories, methods and strategies in architectural research.

Certain architectural offices in Sweden, like White, Sweco and Malmström & Edström, have for a long time been developing research strategies and cooperation with academia, but recent years have witnessed an increasing use of architectural research in relation to innovation and creative design.

The Belgian Scene

Even if there are many schools of architecture in Belgium, it seems that only one of them, the Sint-Lucas School of Architecture, with its campuses in Brussels and in Ghent, has really taken the initiative and consistently worked to develop Research by Design. Their research strategy has been firmly grounded in Research by Design during the past 10 years.

This autonomous school has been Alma Mater to many renowned practitioners, who have made their names in their home countries and abroad. Nevertheless, there was originally no tradition of academic research based in scientific disciplines, as was the case in other schools of architecture that were affiliated with technical universities. The Sint-Lucas School of Architecture has not yet received the right to confer doctoral degrees.

The European guidelines established in the Bologna-Berlin process of 2003 require that all higher education should consist of three levels, the highest of which is the doctoral level. Accordingly, schools of architecture and design must also develop their doctoral levels of education. Thirty years later than in Sweden and twenty years later than in Norway, Denmark and Finland, Sint-Lucas has had to develop a new concept of research to guide the development of its doctoral level of education. Research by
Design was considered to be an explorative, innovative research direction that would comply with the new European policies, on the one hand, and with the school's practice-oriented tradition, on the other. Those responsible for the school's research and research education policies understood that a new culture, a culture of research and doctoral scholarship, should be promoted at the school (Verbeke, 2006:9). An open attitude to developing various ways of defining what research by design could be has made the Sint-Lucas school a laboratory for experiments and engagement involving the staff and the students. The target group for doctoral studies has been younger teachers without any research experience, but with a strong profile as practitioners and teachers of architecture.

The Sint-Lucas School, together with the Network for Theory, History and Criticism of Architecture (NETHCA), arranged an international conference, “The 'Unthinkable' Doctorates”, in 2005. The new insights brought about by this conference seem to have been important for formulating the school's vision of research and for organising its research education programme. In 2006, the Research Education Programme at Sint-Lucas was launched as a series of Research Training Sessions (RTS) modules (Janssens, 2006; Verbeke, 2008). Presently, the RTS series is defined as a two-year programme, consisting of four sessions each year. These sessions are led by various tutors representing international academic experience and/or highly appreciated design practice.

The objective of the RTS series has been to introduce to the participants the essential issues of Research by Design, to discuss these issues with them, and thus to support them in the process of identifying their own research ideas and articulating their own research questions. It is expected that, after completing the two-year course of training, the participants will be able to formulate a research proposal that will serve as the basis for their doctoral projects and that will be based on their own professional practice.

Every year since 2006, the activities connected with the RTS programme have been documented in new volumes of the periodical Reflections+, which thus documents the development of the programme itself and the progression of the RTS participants. The contributions both of the (prospective) doctoral students and of the tutors make up a common platform for developing the new culture of research, which is one of the goals formulated by the school's research strategies some years ago.

In 2009, another international conference was held at Sint-Lucas: “Communicating (by) Design”. There was broad active participation in this conference (with individual paper presentations after peer-review) by those who had been in the RTS programmes. This fact also indicates that a momentous critical mass has been achieved in the numbers of those pursuing Research by Design in their doctoral studies.

Both conferences organised at Sint-Lucas in 2005 and 2009 resulted in comprehensive proceedings. A brief review of their contents and considerations on their quality provide a picture of an ongoing process of maturing in relation to Research by Design.

The Emergent Picture

The intention of this article has been to sketch a picture of how Research by Design in architecture and design has emerged and developed internationally, with a special focus on developments in the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Belgium. It has also been an attempt to position the Belgian development, represented by the Sint-Lucas School of Architecture, in a broader context of other European national scenes.

In our previous texts published in the Reflections+ series, we discussed Research by Design as an emergent, new, practice-based, field-specific research mode in architecture and design.

The brief review in this article of what we found essential on the four national scenes has showed that Walker's concept of how new fields of inquiry mature and how this maturity is indicated by various activities has been useful in perceiving an emergent picture of the process of maturing in the field of Research by Design. We have observed that the critical mass of those interested in the issue of Research by Design has been growing and that it has attracted not only the architectural academia, but also practitioners. We have noted that this approach to research has been introduced into the education of practitioners by some schools of architecture. International conferences have been important for consolidating the movement and for providing opportunities to observe the progression in quality of the research contributions.

Books and journals have created continuity in the development of Research by Design and serve as points of reference for the younger generation of those who are pursuing this approach to research.

The Sint-Lucas School of Architecture has been an important contributor to this development because of its clear research strategies and the consistent way in which they have been implemented. A new research culture has developed, bringing together both the previous and the present participants in the Research Education Programme. For other international milieus of architectural academia, the example of the Sint-Lucas School of Architecture can shed light on the potential of doctoral studies as a vehicle for developing new ways of understanding and pursuing research in architecture and design.
REFERENCES


Ranulph Glanville

Ranulph Glanville has, over the last decade, worked as a freelance, vagrant professor, mainly commuting between the UK and Australia. In the UK he works at the Bartlett, University College London, where he teaches cybernetics. In Australia, he has had a major part in the development of the extension of the Invitational Masters through Practice to the Doctorate through Practice at RMIT University. He also works with other universities helping them develop research, and new courses and projects, particularly the Universities of Western Australia, Canberra and Monash University, Melbourne. He has written on Design Research for over quarter of a century, early on introducing concepts such as research as design and the importance of finding appropriate theory for design within design, rather unquestioningly than importing theories from other subjects. He has a long term working relationship with Johan Verbeke and, through him, with Sint Lucas Architecture. At the moment he supervises PhD students on 4 continents.

Registered Trademark

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>design®</th>
<th>e-design</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>uses models for (acting)</td>
<td>uses models of (what is)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>requires knowledge for (acting)</td>
<td>requires knowledge of (what is)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>design as verb</td>
<td>design as noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>designer present IN the system</td>
<td>designer OF the system, treated as absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>design gives a valuable alternative approach in its own right</td>
<td>design is flawed science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>creative</td>
<td>logical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uses conversational approaches</td>
<td>uses problem solving techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>based in Vitruvian “delight”</td>
<td>trusts “delight” will emerge, otherwise, not much interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understands its material as description</td>
<td>understands its material as fact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>looking for AN answer</td>
<td>looking for THE answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>devours complexity</td>
<td>generates complexity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>criterion for evaluation: good enough</td>
<td>criterion for evaluation: best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the solution defines the problem</td>
<td>the problem defines the solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appreciation of the act of designing</td>
<td>assessment of outcomes of design act (the object produced)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above is intended to draw attention to a couple of significant areas of difference in attitudes to design research.¹ I do not present it in order to promote one side or the other, but to encourage debate. It is divided into 2 columns, the headings of which I explain shortly.

There are two key distinctions I wish to make through this table, which I believe throw light on differences in attitude. The first comes from Gerard de Zeeuw. Years ago, in conversation, he distinguished between what he called “models of” and “models for”. This change of preposition is very powerful. In my expansion of the terms, we get:

models of the world
models for changing the world

¹ The table was developed for the “Design for Social Business” conference in Milan, 18 and 19 October 2010.
Thus, there is a difference in intentionality, and in expectation of action. Models of are, essentially the sorts of ontological descriptions of what scientists seek in describing the world, which can be contrasted to the praxiological, action based descriptions that help us do things. For architects this difference used to be straightforward:3 there were sketch models (models for), roughly made with plastiscine, straws and paper, and there were presentation models (models of), made with white card, balsa and beech. Unfortunately, computers don’t seem very good at making models for, and we end up with models that, even when intended as sketches, look finished—a dangerous deceit.

We can generalise from these models to the type of knowledge we can make. As well as models of and models for, we can suggest knowledge of and knowledge for: knowledge of is the sort of knowledge that describes the status quo, while knowledge for tells us how to achieve something (how to change the world). The sort of knowledge that designers need is this knowledge for changing the world, for that is what designers do, no matter how small the scale of their intervention.

The implication is that what designers need is not knowledge of the world-as-is, but knowledge for changing it. And that, in turn, implies that the research we do should, if it is to help designers, should generate knowledge for (acting). Yet most of the research carried out as design research does not provide us with knowledge to help us act: rather, it tells us what is, usually in the form of some sort of assessment.

I have never been able to track down a written reference to the distinction between models of and models for (even when asking Gerard) so it remains (until he provides other evidence) an anecdotal reference.3

The second distinction is between what I have notated design® and e-design. These terms need a little elaboration.4

By e-design, I refer to engineering design, which some might consider a contradiction in terms. Design® refers to the notion of design as understood by the traditional users, hence the use of the “registered trademark” sign.6 I characterise design® along the lines of Vitruvius, as concerned with “firmitas, utilitas, venustas”. What distinguishes it from e-design is the explicit preoccupation with “venustas”, usually translated into English as delight. In e-design, the modernist creed, “form follows function” is held, and with it the modernist assertion that any form that is truly functional will be beautiful, is believed. This turns “venustas” into an automatic outcome and removes it from necessary consideration, which might be thought a good thing since “venustas” is notoriously slippery whenever we try to quantify it. I see the “traditional users” I associate with design® rather in the way I see the traditional owners of land (the aboriginals) in Australia: there is an element of dispossession as the e-designers take the term design, which was never theirs, for themselves—in the process re-interpreting, or, alternatively, distorting it.

E-design is generally driven by “utilitas” (function), and the attempt to specify this in precise detail, in the belief that this act of specification will, itself, lead to a unique and functionally perfect solution. Such a belief was a key belief behind the work in design methods and research emanating from HfG Ulm in the 1950s, and had a strong influence which can still be sensed in places: my own architectural education was, at least for a period, dominated by this “scientific” approach. Turning the act of design into a problem and then treating it through problem solving methods, may be limited, inappropriate, and even damaging. This is not surprising: engineering is deeply tied up with science, and provides early examples of approaches that have been absorbed into the culture of “problems”.5

In contrast, design®, a way of behaviour originating thousands of years ago, provides an alternative strategy to problem solving. While designers in this older sense undoubtedly have functions to accommodate within their designs, they are looking to do more than this. This is a generous approach that values “venustas” as just as necessary as “firmitas and utilitas”. Designers who place “venustas” at the centre, participate in a particular act that I call a design conversation. This act is quite distinct from problem solving approaches, for it does not attempt universal definition, preferring instead to add elements in an a process of accretion. The design conversation may be thought of as like a normal conversation, except it is carried out through the designer taking two roles—drawer and viewer—instead of requiring (at least) two people; and through, for instance, making and viewing marks on paper rather than by exchanging words and gestures.6 Through this process, situations which to others appear very complex and very ill-defined and messy, can be handled.7 It is an alternative way of dealing with what, in the problem world, becomes called complexity, and it works because it does not problematise, and always allows space for new understandings and appreciations, i.e., more creativity.

5 Problems need solutions. Their nature as problems can, however, be undermined by resolution or dissolution, rather that solution. Of course, the best dissolution might be not to create them as problems, in the first case.

3 However, a discussion of the importance of such prepositional switches in English can be found in Glanville, R (2005) A (cybernetic) Musing: Certain Propositions about Prepositions, Cybernetics and Human Knowing vol 12 nos 1–2.
4 The term design® is not mine, but was invented to make this distinction by Ted Krueger.

2 Although I state this was straightforward, for me it was totally confusing. I never understood there were two types of models till, years after I “finished” my architectural studies, Gerard mentioned the of/for distinction.

26 Registered Trademark
There are differences, too, in evaluation. According to Terry Love,\textsuperscript{8} 70% of published research work in design comes from e-design, and much design research is concerned with evaluation. What is difficult, for a designer, in evaluation is that it doesn't much help us go forward: it tells us what is wrong, but not how to improve. In the terms already introduced, it generates knowledge of, not knowledge for.

But there is perhaps a deeper difference. For the e-designer, complete specification should allow evaluation that would demonstrate perfect adherence, and in those circumstances it is meaningful to talk of the “best solution”. But for the designer\textsuperscript{®}, there can be no best solution. Firstly, the notion of solution is tied up with that of problem: and secondly, since there is little specification (complete or otherwise) there can only be “good enough”. But good enough is surprisingly liberating, and I believe is often better than best.\textsuperscript{9}

These two approaches, design\textsuperscript{®} and e-design, provide us with a spectrum within which much if not all design research can be located. My table suggests a number of polarities that contrast with each other. I do not argue that anyone should be on the left, or the right, on all matters, or that one cannot be in the middle. I suggest that being aware of these polarities and one’s position in them may help us understand differences in approach to design and design research so that we can at least reduce talking at cross purposes. I happen to favour one side, and believe we should be developing a design research that accommodates the qualities of this side. But I know many disagree with my preference.

Ranulph Glanville

\textsuperscript{8} This figure was given in a conversation between Love and me. Love is familiar figure arguing from a firm techno-rationalist position. It would be interesting to know what he means by published, particularly which publications he considers when counting the these figures.

\textsuperscript{9} Good enough is also a halting strategy: when what you have achieved is, you judge, “good enough”, you stop.
The organizers asked me to contribute to the "reflections" series. I feel honoured and obliged by the invitation. At the same time I realize that everything that could be said regarding design research, design PhDs, etc. has been said a hundred times before. Therefore I decided to write a record of my personal RTS experience in November 2010. So I started a diary, which has been slightly edited afterwards. The last contribution to "Reflections" (Vol. 9) was a post-rationalization from a temporal and intellectual distance. This one is deeply involved, almost in "real-time".

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17 November 2010, 06:30 (ICE train from Kassel to Braunschweig)

There is this well-known mix of emotions previous to the Research Training Session in Gent, which will begin tomorrow afternoon. This is unspecific; I experience it every semester when the classes start. And every week when I meet the students anew.

What can I tell them? Which is my specific experience? And then: which is my generalizable experience? No idea. I do not intend to "transfer knowledge" (which knowledge?). The topics and research themes are so various and different. Is there anything in common with the students except the vague intention to strive for a PhD?

On the other hand there are my experiences of entering the conversation with groups of students, the development of the discussion, the emergence of a fragile system of communication in the course of the classes and workshops. Hard work, sometimes exciting, but mostly very rewarding.

I remember a one-day workshop on Systems thinking in Lucerne this May. I had prepared an elaborate schedule before the meeting and felt the same misgivings: Does it work? Does it make sense? The day before there was time for a long boat-trip on beautiful Lake Lucerne. I used it for completely re-arranging the plan. The next day I dismissed the new schedule and came back to the original one. The workshop wasn’t that bad; at least they invited me again for next year.
Back to Gent:

This year there was no time for preparation. We have the schedule from last year, which has been modified and shortened during the course.

Together with Alain again, the gentle, friendly, serious French intellectual. And my friend. The collaboration with him facilitates the situation and at the same time it is a challenge to work with him. Last time we had a positive feedback from the students. That’s why they invited us for the first session this time. Which was my part in this? Alain is much more powerfully eloquent than I am.

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18 November 2010, 07:45 (regional train from Heide to Hamburg Airport)

One short night at home in Northern Germany. From now on I can concentrate on the workshop. Which means calming down, getting into the mood mentally for the next couple of days. More or less.

Starting to read Marc Augé, Nicht-Orte (Non-Places). The book starts with a nice introduction about a man starting an air travel, using the airport setting as a transition space, taking the opportunity to give himself into the guidance and logic of a completely externally determined process. Which provides him with the chance to concentrate on himself for the hours to come. Falling asleep...

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18 November 2010, 11:45 (on the plane from hamburg to Brussels)

Just read my contribution to “Reflections 9” from 2008 entitled “Why / how design research?” and found it quite reasonable and intelligent. The main idea is to conceive the process of design research and especially the PhD process as a design process. The basic and trivial assumption is that a design process creates interfaces or fits between artefacts, which are under the designer’s control and external factors and conditions, which develop evolutionary, uncontrollable or are under the control of others. In consequence PhD students have to design their own individual PhD process. They are the experts for their research areas. How to describe this complex situation? There are:

- personal aspects, such as motivations, passions, job- and family-related constraints,
- academic aspects, such as organizational conditions and obstacles of PhD studies and controversies about design research in the community, and
- contextual aspects, describing the social, environmental, cultural conditions in which all this takes place.

All this seems to make sense, there is a “symmetry of ignorance”, as Horst Rittel once put it, between the PhD students and the tutors. I am getting calmer and more self-confident...

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18 November 2010, 19:30 (at the end of the introductory session)

Alain is so eloquent. I should claim more time and space for myself. I should be more courageous.

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18 November 2010, 23:30 (after dinner, Hotel limited)

Quite happy about the rest of the evening. We had relaxed and friendly and serious talks in the restaurant. Johan’s strategy for RTS and the PhD at Sint-Lucas becomes clearer: one might label it as “radical pluralism”.

Alain and me decide to reduce the schedule for tomorrow.

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19 November 2010, 22:30 (Hotel limited)

A friendly and productive session today. The students presented the first version of their research question and then work on their research visualizations, which they present. Very intensive and seminal talks. The character of the process on the tutors’ side is shifting more towards a dialogue with Alain...

In the afternoon we attend a PhD defense on “Design Research and Reflective Practice”. A memorable performance, to put it neutrally. In fact there are considerable deficits in the content and in the form of the presentation as well as in the debate. Someone next to me speaks of the candidate’s “logorrhea”. Why did the committee accept this thesis?

Afterwards a good discussion with the students about this presentation. They are slightly unsettled about what they had experienced. We tell them that they should not to take this as a normative example. They appear to be relieved.
Belgian beer in a pub and dinner in a Turkish restaurant with Alain. Fairly exhausted.

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20 November 2010, 08:45 (Hotel limited)

Before the final workshop session. Slightly in tension, still.

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20 November 2010, 17:15 (in a coffee shop in Gent)

Tea and apple cake after a walk to the University Library in Gent. A wonderful building by Henry van de Velde. Thinking about the dynamic between Alain and me during the sessions. Sometimes it is a dialogue with distributed roles. He opens up the big picture, introduces the philosophical categories in a very sophisticated manner. I give some more or less intelligent interventions, introducing new, additional aspects, commenting, contradicting sometimes.

Alain has a much broader knowledge in architecture, urban design and landscape architecture than I have. And he always recognizes the philosophical and epistemological categories and frameworks. Nonetheless I think I can contribute to the clarification for the students.

A somehow asymmetric collaboration. I would like to know about the students’ impression on this. Their feedback was positive, they appreciated the “human scale” of the workshop.

Maybe this is my role? The 2nd order observer, including observing myself. Sometimes rather arduous.

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21 November 2010, 06:45 (Hotel limited)

Did not sleep very well. 120 e-mails in my mailbox last night. Still psyched after last night’s conversation with Alain. Agnosticism versus non-agnosticism, scepticism, … Rudolf Steiner, van de Velde, Gropius, Muthesius, Bodack, Corcuff, Goethe, …

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21 November 2010, 14:00 (Brussels airport)

Some very good intermediate presentations in the morning. Excellent integration of project and reflective work. Relaxed. Buying two boxes of Neuhaus pralines. Which has become a kind of ritual when visiting Belgium.

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20 November 2010, 23:00 (Hotel limited)

Excellent dinner in an Italian / Sicilian family restaurant in Hoogstraat. A bottle of Nero d’Avola. Talked to Alain about this distribution of roles. Seems to be ok for him, he considers it a very productive combination and suggested “to make a business out of it”. Very good discussion about our approaches to PhD supervision. We tell the students: “You are the boss.” Which means that the students know best about the design of their PhD journeys. We can be their coaches. It is essential to take them as individual persons, to give them space for expression. I think we are quite good in recognizing their personal motivations and problems and specific needs. Alain says to me: “You are more of a phenomenologist than you think.” Joking about the “cowboys”.

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Wolfgang Jonas
02 December 2010
contributions
participants
Participants of Research Training Sessions – ‘batch 10’

**Wouter Cox** is a visual artist; www.woutercox.be, and is part-time employed since 2005 as teacher in Mixed Media in Sint-Luc School of Architecture, Ghent.

**Thierry Kandjee,** born 1973 in Tananarive (Madagascar), graduated as a landscape architect from ENSP Versailles in 1999. He established TAKTYK [landscape + urbanism] in 2005 with the architect Sebastien Penfornis respectively in Brussels and Paris. He is a design studio lecturer at ENSP Versailles and runs seminars and workshops in urbanism in Sint-Luc School of Architecture Brussels / Ghent, where he is currently conducting a practice-based PhD in collaboration with RMIT Melbourne (Australia).

**Petra Pferdmenges** is the founder of Alive Architecture. She teaches at Sint-Luc School of Architecture Brussels & at the ULG in Liege. Since 2010 she works on her PhD to develop the interaction between space and society. (design research @ RMIT inMelbourne, Australia & Sint-Luc School of Architecture Brussels/Ghent). After having finished the international Master at the TU Delft, Petra worked for five years in renowned architecture offices throughout Europe (Edouard Francois in Paris, Josep Llinas in Barcelona, Architecten Cie in Amsterdam and ARJM in Brussels). Publications contain the Europian 7 CD Rom (Finalist), Nouveaux Albums (Taktyk: Topotypes, Paris), de Architect (Mark Schonderbeek: Autonomie & Architectuur, Rotterdam, 2007), Borderconditions (Mark Schonderbeek: Borderconditions,Sun, Rotterdam, 2010).

**Cristina R. Maier** is currently developing a research project on Interactive Design, initiated at Fakultet for arkitektur og billedkunst, NTNU, Trondheim, Norway and Sint-Luc School of Architecture Brussels/Ghent, Belgium. While working on several projects at distinguished architecture and landscape architecture firms in Norway (Saunders Architecture, Landskap Design, LJB), she became more aware of the added value of a transdisciplinary approach in research and practice. Between 2004-2007, Cristina received a Master of Architecture from Ecole Nationale Superieure d’Architecture de Grenoble, France, a Bachelor of Architecture from the Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, tutor / participated to several International Workshops in France and created various installations. www.altitude-now.com

Participants of previous Research Training Sessions

**Karel Deckers** (*23/05/1975*) – karel.deckers@architectuur.sintlucas.wenk.be

Karel Deckers, Architect and teaching assistant has been organising design studios at the Sint-Luc School of Architecture in Brussels/Ghent since 2005 and at the Politecnico di Torino in 2003. Since 2009, he's undertaking a PhD research at the Chalmers University of Technology, Göteborg entitled 'the architectural Uncanny, the creative use of existential anguish in architectural representation and education’. He has published several papers in (inter)national research contexts. He regularly writes articles for the architectural journal ‘Giornale dell’architettura’. He lives and works in Brussels.

**Aurelie De Smet** – aurelie.desmet@architectuur.sintlucas.wenk.be

Aurelie De Smet studied Architecture at the Sint-Luc School of Architecture for Architecture in Ghent (graduated magna cum laude in 2005) and Urban Planning at the Ghent University (graduated magna cum laude in 2007). After working as an independent Architect for 3 years, she decided to focus more on Urban Planning. Today she is working at Sint-Luc School of Architecture in Brussels as a researcher for Prospective Research For Brussels, combining a research project on ‘The Role of Temporary Use of Voids in Urban (Re) development’ (promoted by Kees Doevendans) with a PhD study at the K.U. Leuven (promoted by Bruno De Meulder and co-promoted by Kees Doevendans) on the same topic.

Johan Liekens – jo.liekens@architectuur.sintlucas.wenk.be
Johan Liekens holds a MD in Architecture from Sint-Lucas School of Architecture Ghent, with a thesis in an architectural anthropological context: mapping mediating spaces and rearchiving spatial experiences of traditional concepts in settlements in Turkey. Besides being part of an architectural practice STUdIOLo architectuur, he is a teacher in the think!studio’s and research studio’s in Interior Architecture at Sint-Lucas School of Architecture Brussels/Ghent. Recently, he started a PhD in ‘Research By Design’ at Chalmers School of Architecture in Gothenburg and Sint-Lucas School of Architecture (promoter: Prof. Dr. Fredrik Nilsson). His doctoral research is entitled ‘Architecture’s Provoking Instrumentality’ and focuses on the critical potential of architecture to unfold through its embodying materiality acts of thought and negotiation.

Burak Pak - pakb@itu.edu.tr http://pakb.blogspot.com
Burak Pak is a postdoc researcher working at Sint-Lucas School of Architecture on a research project about the design and evaluation of experimental virtual environments that support decision making (supported by the innOVIrIS Brussels). He holds a PhD degree in computer-aided architectural design from Istanbul Technical University and he was co-advised by Prof. Dr. Ömer Akin (Carnegie Mellon University). Burak Pak worked as a lecturer at Information Technologies in Design Graduate Program and ITU Faculty of Architecture for 6 years. He has experiences working as a visiting assistant professor at Texas A&M University VizLab and at Carnegie Mellon University. His interest areas are design research, digital design education, generative design and virtual environments.

Bruno Peeters – bruno@exoot.be
architect (exoot) / Teacher at Sint-Lucas School of Architecture.

Dominique Pieters
During her architecture studies at Sint-Lucas School of Architecture in Ghent (BE), Dominique Pieters always found inspiration and advice in architecture books and publications. This was a great motivation to start enriching post graduate studies in journalism at Vleko in Brussels. With about ten years of free-lance experience and a full-time job in architecture journalism, she can mainly refer to extensive dossiers and articles in the Dutch magazine ‘de Architect’ where she was editor and assistant editor-in-chief. Since her return to Belgium, she has been author of several architecture articles and books for national and international editors and artistic leader of the npo Archipel. Together with her function as visiting lecturer at the Technical University of Delft (NL), she started teaching at the Sint-Lucas School of Architecture (BE), where she is currently preparing a PhD as a researcher.

Robin Schaeeverbeke [Bruges, januari 1974]: Got fascinated by architecture through a training as a draughtsman within Beaux-Arts methods of (architectural) drawing at the Academy Of Fine Arts, Bruges. From there on he moved to Ghent and Brussels to take on the study of Master in Architecture graduating in 1998 at Sint-Lucas School of Architecture. Left Belgium for Rotterdam in 1999 to develop designing and graphical skills within several dutch offices. From 2004 onwards he took the opportunity to teach, redevelop and research directions for drawing courses at the Sint-Lucas School of Architecture, Brussels, Belgium. After a period of inquiries and reflections, Robin has started up the "extended drawing project", a PhD project which explores the concept of "hybrid attitudes towards architectural drawing". His active and passive interest in musical improvisation led to a thesis which explores improvised attitudes towards graphical thinking within design.

Participants ‘batch 2010’
Designing the skeleton of landscape
Thierry Kandjie
If we can compose music with silence, can we design our contemporary airy metropolis by its voids?

Design challenges
For long, cities have been considered as fixed systems, single place and single shape. In the last decades contemporary thinking approached cities as urban system and landscape re-emerged as a discipline able to engage with urbanism. If we can question the newness of the idea, this moment offers to contemporary practices some challenging design questions.

Beyond natural preservation, cultivation and representation how to envision our relation to nature? How can we construct innovative public spaces recognizing the increased individualization of our society? How to address issues of time, uncertainty and change in territorial projects, taking into account ecological, political and economical contingencies?

Design operations: Landscape as Process / Skeleton
From biology, garden design, landscape and urbanism, from garden to territory my fascinations deal with landscape as an understanding and a construction of living systems.

The PhD started with the exploration of site based works within the field of landscape architecture understanding that making a landscape is firstly a form of recognition and of identification before it is one of transformation. Approaching site to discover its potentialities to support changes while thinking relational operations are two main patterns that I share with the community of practice I belong to. Previous research seminars helped me to identify within my own practice the use of “skeleton” as an operative device to conduct landscape transformations.

What makes a Skeleton?
We could define the skeleton of landscape as the background or the support of the landscape body and its condition of perception, so to say the poetic hardware of a landscape. This temporary definition is best illustrated using the example of Varanasi (India) ghats who simultaneously stages the encounter of the city and the holy river Ganga with its flooding plain while offering an exceptional cultural expression of a dynamic public space as infrastructure. For many the Varanasi ghats represent a mental image of the city.
In our design investigations we seek to develop such hybrid and dynamic space condition as transforming device, pursuing two objectives:

**Skeleton as poetic experiential device**

From picturesque (scenery) to the design of systems (machine)

Whereas a lot of attention has been given to process thinking in contemporary art and design we wonder how can we re-enact the question of percept? Strangely landscape urbanism often conducts gesture that over focuses on the mechanism of process and fails to address site experience and spatiality. The aim of this research is not only interested in "how things works" but as well how consider landscape as the construction of poetic experiences. The need for "emotionalisation of space"

This term used by Olafur Eliasson addressing his piece “split second” in the latest Venice Biennale as an exploration of sensitivity of time as critical tool. In his conversation with Hans Ulricht Obrist, Eliasson addresses the role of museum as place that give something to take, namely, an experience. This is for us what landscape does.

**Skeleton as operative frameworks**

Most of landscape projects in the European context are dealing with derelicts voids in the metropolitan condition and vast post industrial cultivated or industrial land waiting for renewal. In our practice, we seek to develop strengthening tactics towards weak fragile landscape where the catalyse of regenerative processes allows to construct challenging spatial spaces. Recent projects particularly addresses new forms of agricultural and energy landscape.

How can we design landscape as the construction of structures enabling its transformations, its experience as mental and physical space?

**Case studies: territorial strategies**

**Liquid Sky** (Venice Italy, lagoon park competition entry)

How to realize the encounter of tourism with the lagoon ecosystem?

Dealing with polluted sediments, eutrophisation of the water and ground erosion caused by tourist mobility creates a supportive background to react on in a symbiotic manner. Micro Wave energy is created with an erosion protection mesh that reacts on boat mobility. The machines developed serve 3 purposes: maintenance, living and enjoying. We seek to design reactive process that produces a form of unstable beauty. The machines generate experience, energy and shape the land. Proposing a tourist map of these interventions acknowledge the liquid sky as poetic destination.
Meirama Mine: From Carbon to Forest (Spain, Galicia, invited competition)
Beyond recovery, how to turn a coal mine into a new urban infrastructure?
Accepting fire an overall strategy based on forestry explores the subject of recovery as a ‘pioneer’ act for a larger integrated proposal. Namely the reinvented castro (Celtic form of goods storage) is the skeleton upon which industry, agriculture, forestation, leisure and living are developed. Meiroma mine marks the beginning of the closure of other mining sites across Galicia. The recovery of these mines may result in a chain of future inland parks system for the region, towards carbon forestry.

Coastal study (France, Normandy, prospective study for the ministry of ecology)
How to amplify the role of agricultural systems in difficult economic context?
The existing edge row landscape is turned into an energy forest that becomes the new framework of the coming urban expansion. By providing farmers a renewal of their economic resources, new urban development is developed with a powerful and rich garden forest matrix.

The Design of skeleton
Aiming to locate the research within the community of practice, projects used as experiments and design operations allows to distinguish 3 main fields of enquiry:

The act of observation/recognition of supporting conditions
Methods - tools: Searching for fields of potentialities, critically looking at the site in order to qualifying the void. The design process allows to mediate in between context and its becoming, visible and invisible phenomenon. One of the design patterns is the search for the minimal action device that can support extensive growth, using responsive design strategy.

The reading / writing of landscape narratives processes
Engaging with time and disciplines, the construction of mental images
Methods / tools: To make our work meaningful we construct stories, design operation introducing terms and concepts from a wide range of other fields. The construction of scenarios through narration, the gardening techniques of cultivation, are one of the borrowed operations that allows us to develop urban visions by ensuring the quality of transitions in space and time.

Key terms
Transition / Inversion/ Saturation / Simplification / Abstraction / Impressionism / Tutoring growth

The construction of spatial poetic conditions
Questioning our relation to nature through place making
Methods / tools: Despite a limited palette working with living material using water system as accelerating device offers extraordinary tactile conditions to create meaningful places.

This is an attempt to use strategical thinking as critical recontextualization of our contemporary landscape. How can we construct open structure (physical or mental) that can last? Design space with presence, robust ecologies, form with memory?
How to realize real-time architectural adaptation [to functional change, and to various and dynamic landscapes]? Since there seems to be a constant need for change in our lives, inventing-reinventing becomes evident. ["Inventing is a combination of brains and materials. The more brains you use, the less material you need." — Charles Kettering]

Objectives
In terms of answering this question, two equally important objectives are proposed:

:: experimental prototype[s] representing the innovative practical response
:: analytical study describing the innovative theoretical response
proposed methods

:: transdisciplinary approach [architecture, engineering, design [landscape, industrial and graphic], art and music], both academic and professional environment being envisioned. The transdisciplinary approach [production of new knowledge, innovation] represents an important method that, combined with the academic + professional perspective [more theory + more practice], will lead to an enhanced result.

:: testing innovative materials ["...buildings that use material innovation make a truly artistic and individual impact...”]. Innovative materials constitute one major means of achieving the adaptation to [interaction with] the landscape, as well as to the specific requirements regarding the inner space.

:: testing new building technologies ["...a refining of the complexity of construction [avoiding glues, complex fasteners etc...”]. The finding of new and innovative building technologies is directly linked with the material innovation. Also, it has a major impact on the interactive aspect of the prototype[s], whereby it will facilitate the development of energy-/time frame-/cost-efficiency and reduce the material waste and recycling process. Therefore the choice of the materials and building technology is essential for reaching the specified objectives.

:: prototype[s]:: location: anywhere

:: landmark[s]

Being adapted to various and dynamic landscapes, the prototype[s] would become landmark[s] and in-situ designs at the same time. ["The idea is to create something that emphasizes the beauty of the surroundings, rather than focuses too much attention on the building itself.” ••]

:: performance stage:: temporary art pavilion:: survival shelter

New designs for pavilions are being created quite often [whether for concerts, or for different exhibitions or celebrations...], and are generally installed only temporarily. This not only shows that there is interest in them, but it also reveals an interesting application of the envisioned research project.

:: off-site production

This refers to the realization of the prototype[s] [modular, flexible, unique] off-site, yet somewhere in the site’s vicinity and using the local resources in innovative ways [acquiring energy-/time frame-/cost-efficiency].

:: sensorial ["As today’s generation of materials breaks new ground, many are able to anticipate and respond to changes in the environment.” •]

:: interactive

This represents the main characteristic. [For instance: a touring exhibition for which a pavilion could be adapted to several different landscapes, and then after the exhibition this same pavilion could be converted, for example, into a survival shelter, thus demonstrating its adaptability both to different landscapes and to functional change.]

* George M. Beylerian + Andrew Dent: ULTRA MATERIALS HOW MATERIALS INNOVATION IS CHANGING THE WORLD [2007 Ed. Thames & Hudson]

** Phyllis Richardson: XS GREEN BIG IDEAS, SMALL BUILDINGS [2007 Ed. Thames & Hudson] [pp.36-37, 82-87, 98-99]
developing the real-time architectural adaptation

:: creating multiple innovative designs and energy/time frame/cost-efficiency all at the same time

would represent the highest contributions of this research project. [...always start from scratch, find the core of the issue and dare to be different. Louise Campbell]
The research process began with the formulation of these 5 conceptual terms [keywords]. From a graphic point of view, the lines represent dynamic contexts, while the dual appearance of the terms suggests a dynamic feature and a connection between them as well.

Architecture + landscape represents my main field of interest, which has been further (and significantly) widened in the past four years. During this period, the idea of carrying out a research project through practice began forming itself, together with a growing motivation towards innovation and to take a practical approach.

Within the current context, as well as within the context of an ever intriguing future, questions regarding energy efficiency, building and materials technology, time frame and cost efficiency have been raised.

The envisioned research project, based on interconnections between architecture, engineering, design (landscape, industrial, graphic), art and music, will focus on both practice and theory. "Practical wisdom is only to be learned in the school of experience. Precepts and instruction are useful so far as they go, but, without the discipline of real life, they remain of the nature of theory only." Samuel Smiles

Inquiry within contemporary and innovative technologies regarding the energetic aspect [reduction of the greenhouse gases and the consumption of natural resources...], production and "ultra materials" [materials with low embodied energy, interactive...] will constitute the theoretical basis of the research project.

Within the practical aspects of the research project, the aim is to focus on experimental prototype(s). In the context of a dynamic landscape and life, creative ways of architectural "updating" [adapting to different conditions in real-time] become significant. Intended as landmark(s) with functional flexibility [for example: temporary art pavilion, performance stage...], the prototype(s) will embody an innovative building expertise.

Cristina R. Maier Real-Time Architectural Adaptation

66 67
WHAT IS THE MEANING OF ALIVE ARCHITECTURE? Assuming that architecture has as principal purpose human occupancy, and ‘objects that have self-sustaining processes’ define the notion of life, Alive Architecture’s concern is the design of space and structures that enter into an evolutionary process through the use of people.

HOW DO INTERVENTIONS BECOME ALIVE? The project becomes the animator of people’s behaviour, a curator of occupation. The occupation of the space or object by inhabitants leads to its change over time. Subsequently aliveness is directly linked to people: no use - no aliveness!

WHERE CAN ALIVE ARCHITECTURES BE ESTABLISHED? There is no geographical limitation for projects, they can be initiated throughout the world. Anyhow they are usually applied in spaces of public tenancy: the public domain of the city, the open landscape, public buildings, etc.

WHY IS ALIVENESS RELEVANT IN CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE? The search for the perfect and clean in our cities leads to sterilized ‘non-places’ where everything seems to become controlled: besides the determination of physical space, processes are increasingly captured. It leads to a lack of freedom for society to express in space. To provide for this connection of space and society, occupancy is incorporated into design. Interventions allow for transformations to adapt to people’s needs. Those may change over time as space does.

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH METHOD TO UNDERSTAND THE NOTION OF ALIVE ARCHITECTURE? Everyday practice comprises a body of work that generates reflections. Parts of the practice are mappings of informal occupations, observations of privacy in public domain. These readings inspire projects that provide for lived space. Making links between projects, mappings and both of them lead to a clarification of the notion of Alive Architecture. The concept will be tested in several case studies.

WHICH OTHER PRACTICES ARE CONCERNED WITH LIVED SPACE IN ARCHITECTURE? L’Escaut, established by Olivier Bastin, provides for the construction of use in architecture. Veronika Valk proposes encounter of people through event design in the public domain. Muff works on the borderline of built and lived space. Teddy Cruz provides for support of informal occupations on the borderline of Mexico and the US. Cedric Price proposed adaptable architecture through technical support that respond to the needs of people.

HOW DOES PRACTICE BECOME RESEARCH? Positioning the work in the field of practice will lead to innovation in and for design. Which knowledge did others already reveal? Where is the gap to be filled? The definition of this opening may lead to the production of new knowledge and to a more precise way of acting.
PAVEMENTDWELLERS | MAPPING | MUMBAI | 2009. Inhabitants build their houses onto pavement, thus occupying public space for private use. The structures are meant to be temporary, but often remain as long as any conventional building. The small interiors respond to the limited size of the sidewalk. It leads to an expression of domestic life in public space and to a continuous change of space over time.

SLEEPING UNDER THE STARS | MAPPING | KYOTO | 2008. The Kamo River is the city’s principal public space. People come here for sport, to walk or to have a drink. Urban nomads and their self-built homes under the bridges are part of this encounter with public life. Each of the private shelters has their own identity: the gardener, the river nomad or a cat’s lover with an integrated cat’s farm in his house.
The demand of proposing an installation behind a window lead us to the question: ‘How to turn a vitrine alive?’ Reflection on domesticated windows in relation to public domain brought us to the neighbourhood of the Rue d’Aerschot in Brussels, the red light district of Brussels. The spaces allow the adaption to the needs of the women, thus closing the front curtain cuts of the private sphere from public life. We proposed a copy paste of the lived windows in the Rue d’Aerschot to the vitrine in Ixelles, a rather sophisticated neighbourhood of Brussels. The space becomes transformed and used without the initial use - and provides for encounter of the passers-by with a topic that remains taboo.
Ranulph Glanville initiated the building of a stonewall in the mountains. ‘How could a wall become alive?’ The local material is firewood, without a single stone in the area. The place of encounter around the house is the fireplace. Why not provide for a wall that serves as furniture and as storage for wood to heat the fire? The wall transforms constantly by use.

Petra Pferdmenges

‘How to introduce urbanity in a glade?’ Minimal prefabricated elements pushed onto rails allow keeping the existing atmosphere. Urbanity is not planned, but created by inhabitation of the landscape. The use of space influences areas of regrowing forest. The change of landscape arrives by use, responding to people’s needs.
The Sint-Lucas sculpture garden

If you passed along the Zwarte Zusterstraat in Ghent last year, you most certainly will have noticed the boxes and fragments of buildings scattered all over the public space. At the same time, the exhibition ‘New Monuments’ was on display at the Middelheim Museum in Antwerp. This exhibition was the result of a research project carried out by 13 artists who had been invited by the museum to think about the relevance of the monument in our time. In Ghent, at the epicenter of Sint-Lucas School of Architecture, you could observe how the fragments of buildings that had been washed up years ago and had found a resting place in the sculpture garden were now ready to travel again and find their place in new architectural constellations.

As a student I was fascinated by this outdoor Wunderkammer and the stories from a heroic past about the blue paint action, when one night a group of students illegally painted the whole floor of the sculpture garden blue, quoting Picasso: ‘Si vous pouvez peindre en bleu, vous pouvez peindre’. At that time you could still see the traces of their action and we imagined what the visual impact must have been. Maybe it was the blue paint that stimulated me to look at the fragments of cornices, columns, capitals, finials, tracery, arches and the grotesque animals, or the fact that it was such a specific place in Sint-Lucas next to the library with its little improvised cafeteria terrace.

To quote Rodin: ‘Je veux leur payer (les fragments des Cathédrales) ma dette de gratitude, moi qui leur dois tant de bonheur.’ My contribution to this edition of Reflections will be about the objects in this sculpture garden, a topic that fits well into the theme of my PhD thesis about urban objects and that also serves as a reflection on Sint-Lucas. In recounting four different micro-stories, I will try to come to an understanding of my fascination with this inner courtyard. One is about the origin of this collection, the second is about the esthetic aspects, the third is about the possible meaning of these fragments, and the last is about the spatial structure.
The pedagogical value as part of the Sint-Lucas tradition

This outdoor collection is an important witness to the development of art education in Flanders. In the book *Bouwkundig tekenen* by Brother Alfred, we can read about the revolutionary significance of this collection of models assembled by Brother Marès, who chose each of them from among the most exquisite elements that have survived the centuries. He started actively to collect in 1862, one year after the official round of inspection by the government education authorities, whose task it was to improve drawing education in Flanders and who wrote in their report that ‘the examples in the collection are inadequate’. But the collection represents more than what you actually see. It points to an artistic ideal that is intended to bring together everything that one needs to learn.

The aim of this collection was not just to provide models for learning to draw but, most of all, to develop a sensibility for good taste or, to use the words of Kindt (L’application de l’art, 6), ‘to increase the student’s cultural and moral level … his or her interest had to move from the vulgar to the sublime.’ The artistically skilled craftsmen developed Marès’ sense for beauty and craftsmanship by means of an original educational model focused on drawing. In 1963 Alvin wrote in Alliance de l’Art et de l’Industrie: ‘We urgently need to train technical draftsmen for industry to make our country once again the top contender and even the master of the other nations, as it was during the Middle Ages.’

Scattered all around, for Rodin, there are beautiful remnants in which you can find the knowledge and love of generations of other craftsmen. Marès advises the students to study this magnificent accumulation of debris in his collection, and if they want to understand it, then they should go and see it at different times of the day and night and in different seasons and weather, because the beauty of these works, created to stand in the open air, changes with the passing of the hours and days, and with the changing seasons. It is worth noting that, still today, students do this survey and make sketches in the garden at Sint-Lucas Ghent as we can discover in the drawings on the building of Xavier de Geyter. What is now modern will gradually become a monument.

The paradox of the fragments

In *Les Cathédral de France*, Rodin explains that, despite everything, our old stones still live and it is now our duty to collect these relics and protect them. He calls these unintentional monuments the true precious stones of our civilization. If we destroy them, a very specific knowledge will be lost forever. To understand those words, a lecture published in the *Sint-Lucas Jaarboek* 1991–1992 by Prof. Dr. J.H. van den Berg is very helpful, in which he speaks about the authenticity and the temporality of the displaced architecture fragments of the Sint-Odiliënberg Church that he placed on the display table during his lecture. He focused on how those fragments possess time and how we can observe this time-possession, and he explains to the students how during the materialization of a design you create time in the timeless stone.

In the sculpture garden you can observe the cycle of creation and destruction. The acceptance of transience is what makes the most simple objects interesting, fascinating and beautiful. This knowledge, according to which a designer must open the perfection and integrity of his design to the action of time and the natural process of degradation, is what the Japanese call the Wabi-sabi aesthetic. Aloïs Riegl understood this other perception of the world and, in the context of the preservation of monuments, he focused on the explicit opposition and conflict between the historical value (valeur historique) and the value of age (valeur d’ancienneté). The first is scientific, the second direct and sensitive. Such a conflictual opposition is meaningful for an institute of science & art.

After explaining the importance of the value of age, Aloïs Riegl explains that the cult of the value of age prospers upon its own demise. A permanent refusal to conserve and restore, where the natural forces have free play, leads necessarily to the total destruction of the monument. Rodin writes: ‘Le temps lui vole chaque jour un peu de sa vie, mais les restaurateurs lui volent son immortalité.’ He asks, in the name of our ancestors and in the interest of our children, that we no longer either destroy or restore the monuments. For Rodin, the plan is visible in the fragments, and the restorations capture neither the light nor the spirit of the work.

This fascination for everything that the fragments in the sculpture garden have undergone year after year focuses on the obvious traces of their great age. These traces reveal that many of the fragments are moving toward the complete dissolution of their forms, a condition in which they will no longer be able to evoke their original state or value. In contrast to the historical value, which implies the static aim of eternal preservation, the value of age incessantly functions to illuminate the dynamic cycle of creation and destruction that will destroy the very value that brought it to light.
Effective and poetic collection

We know that the collection that Brother Marès started was an effective collection, but one and a half centuries later we are more inclined to regard it as a poetic collection. Among the fragments in this courtyard, you have this strange sensation that you are in a Baroque garden where a variety of incongruent elements have been brought together. All those disparate, seemingly unrelated objects that have been displaced from their original context, as in a Vanitas painting, all tell their stories of the fragility of earthly existence. Those objects are all brought together as in a metaphysical interior of De Chirico but, as Jean Cocteau famously observed, ‘ils ne se sont pas donnés rendez vous’.

The notion of interrelationships between things becomes just as important as the things themselves, while their meaning remains impenetrable and open to an infinity of interpretations. Suddenly, the past acquires a contemporaneous value and we discover new meanings for all those urban objects.

A junk-space prototype

In the sculpture garden you sense that the makers had a desire to give the impression of excess to the collection, by assembling an inexhaustible number of varieties. This is a quality that Rem Koolhaas attributes to the concept of Junk-space. For him, all Junk-space prototypes are urban, and the whole point of cities lies in this overwhelming effect – the urban overkill. But the analogy is even stronger when we know that the work Merzbau, by Kurt Schwitters, was the original stimulus that led to Koolhaas’ reflection on the Junk universe. Merzbau and the sculpture garden are both collections, or accumulations of consciously chosen (urban) debris that have been reassembled a number of times in a closed space.

I found in Junk-space a spatial organization principle or spatial model that fits with the sculpture garden, namely a model that substitutes accumulation in the place of hierarchy, and addition in the place of composition. Or, as Koolhaas says: ‘More and more, more is more.’ In Junk-space we observe how, instead of uniting, space actually splinters, how fragments come together, and where each element performs its task in negotiated isolation. The map of the collection is a radar screen on which individual pulses survive for unpredictable periods of time in a Bachalian free-for-all.

LITTERATURE:
Br Alfred, Maurice, Bouwkundig tekenen Initiation à l’architecture, Drukkerij Kasterman, Doornik, 1937.
Eco, Umberto, Vertigine della lista, Bompiani, Milano, 2009.
The sculpture garden of Sint-Lucas
Participants of previous Research Training Sessions
Integrating Prospective Research for Brussels Projects into Design Education

The free-spirited, open and practice-oriented nature of the Sint-Lucas School of Architecture provides an innovative and inspiring medium for researchers. The academic environment facilitates rewarding discussions and the generation of ideas that can be progressively reflected onto Prospective Research for Brussels studies. This kind of knowledge transfer plays a significant role in our own research practices. However, the focus of this article is on the transfer of knowledge in the opposite direction:

‘How can knowledge and experiences obtained through Prospective Research for Brussels Projects be reflected in design education and practice?’

Motivated by this question, we want to discuss such reflection possibilities by referencing our efforts towards integrating research into design education and practice. Therefore, in this article, we will introduce our prospective research themes individually. Then we will describe our integration experiences in order to create a basis for our discussion. In conclusion, we will try to reflect these experiences onto a more general level.

1. Prospective Research Themes
The Role of the Temporary Use of Voids in Urban (re)Development
by Aurelie De Smet

The aim of this project (promoted by Kees Doevendans) is to investigate whether Temporary Use projects - often associated with open interpretation and self organization - could play a significant (i.e. structural) role in urban planning. The project involves the exploration of the possibility of deriving structural proposals for the elaboration of innovative urban development strategies from temporary projects and practices. It also covers the discussion of the possibility to steer, influence or trigger urban transformations by means of the temporary use of so-called ‘pause-land/spaces’.

When socio-economical processes are confronted with the inertness of the built environment, this can result in ‘interruptions’ in the continuity of the urban fabric - as can be experienced in places of conflict, deterioration and/or vacancy. The readjustment and reappropriation of these kinds of spaces are time-consuming. Therefore, there will always be a certain number of (city) spaces that are ‘in transition’. These spaces tem-

1 The authors of this article have been awarded long-term grants by the “Institute for the Encouragement of Scientific Research and Innovation of Brussels” (ISRIB) to conduct research in the Sint-Lucas School of Architecture. These grants are awarded for “Prospective Research” proposals that can potentially contribute to the future development of the Brussels-Capital Region. Since January 2009, both of the authors have been working as full-time researchers at Sint-Lucas.
Aurelie De Smet & Burak Pak

porarily seem to have little or no function because they have been abandoned by the previous user(s). Either a future function still needs to be defined for them or the implementation of a defined future function is being delayed for certain reasons. Spaces in transition can be large or small scale, public or private and built or unbuilt, but they all have in common that they are experiencing some kind of in-between phase – a pause – in functionality. These are the spaces that are described as ‘pause-land/spaces’\(^2\) and that are the focus of this project.

Above and opposite:

Figure 1: PRFB-project: The Role of the Temporary Use of Voids in Urban (re)Development

Through the use of literature study and document analysis this project is combining a theoretical study of the characteristics and potentials of vacant (city) spaces (e.g. based on the works of Lefebvre (1974), Rémy & Voyer (1981), Soja (1996), Solà-Morales (1997), Bauman (2000, 2004), Branzi (2006) and Farone & Sarti (2008)) with a comparative study of emerging practices and strategies (involving temporary use and originating in the activist field). This results in the construction of a theoretical and conceptual framework that provides a basis for the empirical part of the research project.

The empirical part of the project concentrates on the spatial context of the Brussels-Capital Region. Through the selection and study of 10 cases, research into the spatial conditions, the different types of temporary use and the actors involved, is leading to an overview of the current situation and the existing potentials within the Region. As a result, this project offers conclusions and recommendations on the possible role of Temporary Use in urban planning in general and specifically for urban (re)development and the governance of the Brussels-Capital Region.

A Virtual Environment Model for Analysis and Evaluation of Alternative Urban Development Projects for the Brussels-Capital Region

by Burak Pak, PhD

Promoted by Prof. dr. Johan Verbeke, this prospective research project is a cross-disciplinary effort aiming to investigate potential relations between urban design and information-communication technologies, their possible applications and implications for the Brussels-Capital Region.

This study highlights the potentials of the unrealized urban development projects as a source of knowledge. It aims to discuss the merits of these Alternative Urban
Development Projects by establishing a rich multimodal semantic information base, a virtual medium through which actors can exchange ideas and shape the future strategies.

This research project involves transferring knowledge between Information and Communication Technologies and Urban Design and Planning; informing both disciplines about possible opportunities and shortcomings. Furthermore, it requires an investigation of Alternative Development Projects at Urban Scale prepared for the Brussels-Capital Region.

The following questions are aimed at developing this project, with a focus on the Brussels-Capital Region:

- How can Alternative Urban Development Projects be used as a source of knowledge?
- How can the tangible and intangible aspects of Alternative Urban Development Projects be represented?
- How can these representations lead to ideas other than those we already have in our minds?
- What are the existing and possible ICT tools and media related to Urban Design and Planning of Brussels-Capital Region?
- What are the expectations of related parties from such a virtual environment model?
- What are the possible practical applications of the model, and how can it be tested?
- What are the results of the evaluations by different experts using the medium?

Besides the primary questions above, secondary questions are addressed in order to situate the research project in the context of Brussels-Capital Region. These questions are directly related to the history and to the current physical and administrative descriptions, the existing operational framework, the planning tools, the mechanisms, the actors and the relations between these. Moreover, questions concerning the availability of Alternative Urban Development Projects, multidimensional data in URBIS (Brussels Capital Region GIS System) and ICT usage patterns of the related parties are necessary to test the validity of the major claims of the research project.

Figure 2: Interface prototype for developed or the Virtual Environment Model
2. Integration

uAD Design Studio, semester 01, Brussels campus: ‘Brussels Canal - everyday spaces in transition’

Since the 2008-2009 academic year, Sint-Lucas School of Architecture has been offering a 2-year international program leading to the degree of Master of Architecture. The program explores Architecture from a research-by-design and design-by-research perspective. The program is characterized by a fully Integrated Design approach, offering courses in the areas of ‘History and Theory’, ‘Building Technology’, ‘Professional Practice’ and ‘Design Tracks’.

From this year (2010-2011) on, Sint-Lucas is even putting more emphasis on the Design Tracks being developed as an integrated and interdisciplinary cluster of the Design Studio and the Theoretical Components, thus allowing for a dynamic, cohesive and sustainable approach. Based on an interdisciplinary learning process, the students are expected to develop a theoretical stance on current issues within the program’s focus. The emphasis is on teamwork in small, highly international teams.

This academic year (2010-2011), the first semester Design Studio of the international Master of Architecture in the Brussels campus was organized and run by an interdisciplinary team:

- Livia de Bethune (Coordinator)
- Chotima Ag-Ukrikul (Coordinator)
- Aurelie De Smet (Theoretical Component)
- Burak Pak (Neogeography and Virtual Environments)
- Marijke Brondeel (GIS)
- Robin Schaeverbeke (Mixed Media)
- Jan Bruggemans (Study Trips)

This Design Studio is formulated as an area-focused exercise, with the aim of confronting the students with an urban(istic) way of reflecting on architecture in which the place itself is the leading principle (not the program or the volumetric composition). The architectural projects are created by means of an extensive analysis of the (spatial) problems of a wider area.

The Theoretical Component (TC) of this semester falls under the domain of ‘History and Theory’ and is presenting possible visions of urbanity (and landscape). Its aim is to sustain the analysis of the place and the reading of the city as a contribution to the architectural design process. Thus a research by design way of working is introduced to the students.

In addition to the regular components, weekly Neogeography Workshops (NW) are also given to facilitate student use of the virtual environment model developed by Burak Pak.

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Theoretical Component Theory and History: ‘Temporariness as a laboratory for the permanent’ by Aurelie De Smet

One of the most important recommendations, after two years of theoretical and comparative studies and the realization of 10 case studies within the framework of PRFB, is that the attitude towards temporary use should rather be ‘facilitating’ than ‘regulating’.

It is first of all very important that policy makers and planners should start to recognize the value of pause-land/space for the city and begin to see them as an opportunity rather than as a threat. Indeed, pause-land/spaces are places where alternative and/or innovative functions and users can get the opportunity to develop themselves (functioning as laboratories or ‘testbeds for change’, as Shane (2005) describes them) and where less established or less dominant actors can get the chance to participate in urban life and to contribute to the shaping of their environment. Through the adoption of this attitude, effective support (by policy makers) and utilization (by planners) of the potential of these spaces – to act as social and spatial catalysts – can be realized. Based on the preliminary conclusions of the project, we claim that it is of essential importance for urban planners and designers to recognise and acknowledge the potential of temporary use practices/projects to make valuable contributions to their future urban projects. These professionals must come to consider temporary use practices/projects as an obvious part of the spatial planning/design process. This will help them to recognize that the full time span of a spatial project starts from the conceptual phase and from the first moment they are introduced to the project area or site (as opposed to starting from the moment the realization on the site begins).

Together with the studio coordinators, the aim was to take the opportunity - through the organization of the Theoretical Component ‘Temporariness as a laboratory for the permanent’ - to present the conclusions of the PRFB project ‘The Role of the Temporary Use of Voids in Urban (re)Development’, to young (urban) designers and to further explore the potentials of temporary projects through their work in the Design Studio. We foresaw the following potentials and/or contributions:

3 interim report of the project available at: adesmet.be/online/PRFB/activiteitenrapport_aurelie_de_smet.pdf
- Raising students awareness on the issue of ‘in transition’ urban spaces
- Introducing notions such as ‘mapping controversies’ and ‘temporary use’ to the students and encouraging the consideration of those in their own (studio) design work
- Stimulating alternative and more thorough study of the project area in the analysis phase (by providing examples of methods of researching, mapping and reading the environment)
- Contributing to the logical development of the architectural design project proposals starting right from the analysis phase (amongst others through organizing temporary installations/interventions as a communication exercise)
- Stimulating theoretical reflections on the design activities (through assigning the students to keep a ‘research and design journal’)
- Testing out the possibilities of temporary installations/interventions as a communication tool

The Theoretical Component was thus strongly integrated into the Design Studio program and actively contributed to it (especially during the analysis phase).

(The) Medium is the Message: Utilizing the Virtual Environment Model in the Design Studio
by Burak Pak, PhD

After two years of research work within the framework of the prospective research project ‘A Virtual Environment Model for Analysis and Evaluation of Alternative Urban Development Projects for the Brussels-Capital Region’, a functional, prototype has been developed. This web-based environment supports the representation and organization of alternative urban projects in a multimodal and inspiring manner, covering the intangible aspects of these projects as well as spatial relations in a 4D format (This prototype is being further developed in consultation with ATO (Agentschap voor territoriaal ontwikkeling) and BRAL (Brusselse Raad voor het Leefmilieu)). This environment is also suitable to be used as a virtual medium to support an urban design studio. Such a use case scenario has been already been tailored along with the research project and discussed thoroughly in the Prospective Research for Brussels project report4.

Starting from this point, we decided to test the prototype virtual environment in the Fall Semester 2010 Urban Architecture Design Studio in collaboration with uAD Studio coordinators. For this purpose, a special server hosting the prototype software was made available to the students at the beginning of the course. This virtual environment which has acquired a reputation as a serious information base differs from free hosted blogs and websites due to the possibility of semantic definitions and links, tight Google Earth integration and the multimodal support it offers.

In order to facilitate the use of this environment, open workshops were held every week. In these workshops, the basic concepts of virtual environments and Neogeography were discussed, including crowdsourcing and fair use practices. The expected outcomes of integrating research findings into the design studio were multifaceted:

- Exploring the potentials of the prototype virtual environment to support design education
- Improving the design studio and interaction between the students by creating a medium of discussion
- Improving the effectiveness of the design studio through the use of enhanced communication strategies
- Providing a proof of concept for valuing student projects as a source of knowledge
- Possible transfer of knowledge to future design studios
- Establishing a base for a possible environment covering the analysis and the design process of multiple design studios

As a result, and through the efforts of the students, a virtual environment including an extensive amount of information related to the analysis and development phases of the design studio has been created. It can be accessed via http://urbanarchitecture-design.be.

4 available through: burak.pak@architectuur.sintlucas.wenk.be

Figure 4. The prototype virtual environment used in the Fall Semester 2010 Urban Architecture Design Studio
3. Reflections

Strategies
To assist the integrations of Prospective Research for Brussels Projects into Design Education, we allocated a variety of strategies, tools and resources. As full-time researchers we have dedicated time and effort to stretch the scope of our projects towards a pragmatic context so that they could be applied in the design studio. In this way, we broadened the aims of the projects to include pedagogical interests. For instance, in the case of the ‘The Role of the Temporary Use of Voids in Urban (re)Development’ project, the policy-oriented research scope was broadened to allow application in design education. Similarly, in the ‘A Virtual Environment Model for Analysis and Evaluation of Alternative Urban Development Projects for the Brussels-Capital Region’ study, the complexity of the proposed virtual medium was reduced to serve the needs of a design studio.

Integration tools
In various workshops and in collaboration with the studio coordinators, we provided hands-on experiences for the students and introduced them to different methods for reading, researching and mapping the environment. Furthermore, guest lecturers (from different backgrounds and with different visions and approaches) were invited to give lectures and seminars on current issues within the studio’s focus, in order to speed up the international students’ familiarization with the Brussels (planning) context and the project focus area. Knowledge from different areas was presented and combined in numerous modules, thus establishing a solid theoretical background and encouraging the students to experiment with different types of media. In the Theoretical Component notions such as ‘Temporariness as a laboratory for the permanent’, ‘research by design’, ‘mapping controversies’ and ‘temporary use’ were introduced to the students. In the NeoGeography Workshops, the opportunities provided by new emerging technologies and approaches were explained. These workshops, guest lectures and seminars, and modules contributed to the forming of the students’ visions for the future of the project area and to the conceptualization of the temporary installations. They also facilitated communication and reflections on the students’ work through the virtual environment model.

Individual observations
Reflecting on the integration process, we also made some more concrete individual observations. In relation to the Theoretical Component, we can say the following: During the seminars some interesting and critical discussions arose about the topics dealt with. In this way, the students got acquainted with the topics, which thus became part of their knowledge base. As a result, some of the students are, for example, taking notions related to ‘temporary use’ into account when constructing their own vision of the future development of the area.

During the analysis phase we saw that the students indeed employed several alternative methods to explore and read the area in order to form a future vision. This was also encouraged and reinforced by the design studio coordinators who focused the analysis on alternative topics such as: activity, density, consumption, networks, (in) formal, interaction, borders/limits, everyday life, fragile, contrast and time. This resulted in interesting approaches and findings (different from the traditional analyses and results focussing e.g. on traffic, green space,…) e.g. time(tables) analysis, comfort maps, ‘garbage’ analysis, …

Nevertheless we have to note that the expected results from the analysis phase (= formulating a vision for the future development of the area) might not have been clear enough from the beginning. As a result it took the students quite a long time to evolve from the analysis to concrete visions and architectural design project proposals. In the future, besides focusing on analysis methods, the TC could also pay more attention to and give examples of possible outcomes of the analysis.
During the Interaction Week the students were asked to communicate and test their own visions regarding the future development of the area (arising out of the previous analysis), by setting up a temporary installation/intervention. From this they would then be able to draw conclusions on the development of an architectural design project proposal, which would stimulate transitions in this area. Initially it seemed hard for the students to conceive of the temporary installations as a test for communication of their vision. (At first, the installations were seen more as onetime events (free of engagement) rather than as a part of the research (and learning) by design process.) Studio guidance, the presentation of examples and a working method (in a TC lecture) and the introduction of an information framework to assist the students' thinking, designing and realization processes served to clarify the communicative intentions of the temporary installation/intervention.

Numerous interesting temporary installations/interventions were created. They were presented to a broader public during a walk guided by the (TC & Studio) Tutors (13 November 2010, 2 to 6 pm). Some examples of the installations are presented and discussed below:

The 'Huge Mikado' installation illustrates how an urban game can invite people to interact with each other and to start looking at their everyday environment in a different way.

The 'Garbage Man' installation addresses a more selective target audience and allowed the students to engage in (verbal and non-verbal) communication with the ‘users’ of this (derelict) site. The group members did observations and informal interviews with the site users during the process of building the installation and followed up the evolution of the installation afterwards. In addition, they asked for comments on their work through Facebook.

5 all the projects can be consulted on www.urbanarchitecturedesign.be

The ‘Temporary Architectural Office’ intervention illustrates how designers can talk in an unofficial way about a small-scale architectural project not only to the people living adjacent to it but also the passers-by.

The results of employing the proposed virtual environment (urbanarchitecturedesign.be) were rich and diverse. First of all, using this environment, the students were able to learn from each others’ projects, which created a better integrated design studio and expanded their vision. The proposed virtual environment greatly facilitated the analysis phase through the sharing of data and collective knowledge production by means of Media Wiki and Google Earth-based interfaces. This kind of support is essential, especially considering the international profiles of the uAD students. This environment also promoted communication and interaction between the tutors and students and even with third parties outside the sphere of the school. Representation of the student projects in the proposed virtual environment made them more comparable and this contribution was highly appreciated by the studio coordinators. Furthermore, the uAD students learned to communicate and reflect on their designs using various means, including alternative analysis topics, images and models, all of which stimulate them to think more about the conceptual foundations of their projects.

In conclusion, it is important to note that this model offers a solid way of evaluating student projects. It provides opportunities for the transfer of the rich knowledge produced within the framework of a design studio to future studios, thus establishing a basis for the sustainable development of education and design ideas.

Future opportunities

From the above we can conclude that the proposed integration of Prospective Research for Brussels Projects into the Design Studio offered many opportunities in this particular case. The integration strategies introduced in this study can be reconfigured and expanded to create new ones. In this context we propose various paths that can be taken for future integration of Research Projects into Design Studios:

A. Informing Prospective Research and fostering new ideas through the inspiring process and outcomes of an Integrated Design Studio

B. Exploring novel Integrated Design Studio set-ups by combining strategies, resources, tools and outcomes from Prospective Research with the Design Studio Process

C. Creating new knowledge resources by organizing Integrated Design Studios informed by Prospective Research findings and strategies.

These potentials can be combined in different ways to achieve different goals. In the past semester, we have explored just one of these directions. We think that the framework presented in this article can be useful for the development of future alternative integration projects.
BY DESIGN FOR DESIGN 3 differs from the first two editions on two significant points: in its degree of publicness and in its degree of exchange with the world of design.
Invited by curator TeamTank to be part of the 15th anniversary of the Design Platform Limburg initiative “Toegepast”, BDFD3 left the display window of Sint-Lucas School of Architecture for the display window of the Design Vlaanderen Galerie in Brussels. Designers from the Toegepast program joined the RTS participants for the workshops, and the visitors who were present at the opening of the BDFD3 exhibition came from walks of life. The questions that BY DESIGN FOR DESIGN raises about the research value of design, the design value of research, design as research and research as design became all the more pertinent. All of these are important and successful steps - there is no way back.

I want to thank Tine Holvoet of TeamTank for working together with me on BDFD3. I am convinced that the added value we both had in mind has become a visible fact.
Testing output by reverse engineering of research. Photo credit: Ben Robberechts

BY DESIGN FOR DESIGN is a creative meeting about design and research. It induces its participants, guests and reporters to approach research with the specificity of their profession as architect, interior architect, urban planner, artist or designer: creatively, inventively, designerly. BDFD is a designed environment where relations between research and design are simultaneously generated and explored by means of creation and creative exchange. The BDFD event starts as a workshop with coffee in the morning and ends in the evening as a public exhibition with a festive opening and a drink. It is a creative meeting of worlds: cultural, artistic, academic and professional.

Right now we are working with former and future participants on a publication. This will be a workbook or notepad using BDFD3 as a turning point to reflect on previous editions and to work on future ones: BDFD4, 5, 6, … It will offer you workspace and material: blanks you can experiment with, short readers you can rip and toolboxes you can flip through. So watch out for your BY DESIGN FOR DESIGN WORKPAD or place your order here:

Yes, I want to receive my BY DESIGN FOR DESIGN WORKPAD.

Marc Godts, 4 Feb 2011
Abstract

The St Lucas School of Architecture in Ghent and Brussels has developed an implicit tradition of designing and doing – kinds of – research simultaneously. Our article focuses on the first of a series of research studios in Interior Architecture, called ‘Explicit’. This studio aims at making research not only explicit as a motor of design processes, but even important, as a way for the interior architect to act within and with the world, by means of his or her architectures. The studio develops and uses designerly research methods, theories and practices, edifying knowledge and competence. We argue that the Explicit research studio emanates an educational environment that is able to foster, produce and represent knowledge, but that it also institutes and propagates involvement and care. The Explicit Studio forms a temporary, small and intense research community where – often contradictory – values and types of knowledge are shared and exchanged.

In the spring of 2010, two researchers sheltered their respective research subjects (Johan Liekens’ “Architecture’s provoking instrumentality”, and Karel Deckers’ “Creative workings of the architectural ‘uncanny’” in Explicit’s educational environment.

This article elucidates the educational framework constituted in the interplay between both research projects. It lists the most important characteristics, objectives and structures of the research studio. It also elucidates Explicit’s paradoxical interplay in between the individual and the collective, the process and the result, the method and the medium.
COMPILING A RESEARCH STUDIO CALLED ‘EXPLICIT’

° preconditions and situatedness of ‘Explicit’

‘Explicit’ converged out of certain currents and concerns present within the Academic Master’s Degree Program in Interior Architecture. In short, these currents and concerns are twofold: they are about ways of seeking and shaping a profile for the student: the profile of researcher-designer; and they connect to the process of academization in general that is running through our educational system. ‘Explicit’ as a title then means an effort to render explicit research, which we as a school always considered to be implicitly present in all our designing activities, in our ‘being designers’.

The implantation of ‘Explicit’ is therefore not random. First, the studio is situated at the end of the Bachelor phase, thus making it a threshold: a culmination of the Bachelor phase, on the one hand, and a precursor to the one-year Master’s phase, on the other. For the student, this liminal space means a transition from merely training in Interior Architecture to a self-propelled profiling in Interior Architecture, a growing manifestation of what it can mean to be an interior architect within the world. As a result, ‘Explicit’ does not present the student with a clearly circumscribed program or brief that he or she has to execute: rather, it issues an invitation to work towards a manifestation, with Interior Architecture as a means. ‘Explicit’ creates a framework to work from.

Secondly, as stated above, ‘Explicit’ is intended to be a significant – and, up to the moment of its genesis, missing – explicit concretization of academic research by design in the design studios. Accordingly, the students have to work at clarifying their visions of the role and potential of research by design in their discipline, in their practice and in the world as a whole.

In close relation to this, ‘Explicit’ comes as the next step in coupling research and education. Teachers involved in academic research, through their submersion in the existing and forming structures of academic research by design (as in the Research Training Sessions organized at Sint-Lucas) and in a multitude of international collaborations, connecting to research education, share their insights, methods, theories and practices within the design studio ‘Explicit’.

° compiling ‘Explicit’ as a loose facilitating framework

As stated above, the compiling of ‘Explicit’ is in the first place a matter of creating the conditions – as a framework – within which a certain form of research by design can emerge and develop. This article is about the creative interplay between tutor and student, (both of whom are considered to be researchers), between the individual and the collective, the process and the result, the method and the medium, and between the objectives and the contingencies determining that framework. It is about framing – and simultaneously questioning – the framework. It lists the keywords around which this framework has emerged, sometimes as monographic considerations stemming from the individual research projects of both researchers and tutors, and sometimes as notions mediated between the different research projects and between all the different actors operating in the research studio (tutors, researchers visited in residence, students, audiences, discipline, world). It describes the characteristics of ‘Explicit’, as they were either conceived at the start of the studio or discovered during the process of the studio.

As said before, two individual research projects have temporarily been joined in the facilitation and compilation of ‘Explicit’: Johan Liekens’ ‘Architecture’s provoking instrumentality’, and Karel Deckers’ ‘Creative workings of the architectural uncanny’. Both research projects are being conducted as PhD projects in Research By Design in collaboration with the Chalmers School of Architecture. In addition, two architect-researchers were visited: Filip Berte, with the research project Eutopia, and Thomas Lommée, with the research project OpenStructures.

What follows is a mediation between keywords, in an effort to narrow down the content and construction of ‘Explicit’. 
From the research project ‘Architecture’s provoking instrumentality’, the idea is adopted that a strong potential for architecture lies in considering itself as a thought provoking instrument, rather than being – only – the fixed product of functional and aesthetic preoccupations, or the product of conceptual thought occurring only in the mind of the architectural author. In this latter view, architecture is presented to the ‘user’ as a closed object, to be contemplated or used in predetermined ways. Contrary to this, ‘Architecture’s provoking instrumentality’ envisions architecture as a potential trigger or agent to install critical negotiation, deliberately inviting for the co-creation of meaning.

In the research project, architecture is rather seen as something that rises up in the world, to be possibly ‘encountered’ by all passengers in their journey through everyday reality, rather than ‘used’ or ‘contemplated’ by abstract and passive users – the little anonymous and powerless white puppets in the model. These encounters, co-instrumentalized by architecture, can give rise to unexpected events, to the projections of thought within each of these passengers. ‘Something in the world forces us to think’, Gilles Deleuze writes when seeking for a new image of thought for his thinking. ‘Architecture’s provoking instrumentality’ identifies architecture as such a ‘something’. (Deleuze, 1994) The architectural artefact is powerful: in ‘Hertzian tales’, Dunne cites Robinson on this point: ‘Artefacts people interact with have enormous impact on how we think. Artefacts do not merely occupy a slot in that process, they fundamentally shape the dynamic itself.’ (Robinson, 1994)

‘Architecture’s provoking instrumentality’ in the research project thus is not a dull instrumentality, proposing definite means to definite ends; rather it is a slightly frictionous and refreshing kind of instrumentality. The architectural instrument can be considered to be, in accordance with Rajchman’s insight, ‘a complicating machine’ (Rajchman, 2000), setting problems and fostering contingencies instead of answering problems and advocating determinacy.

The architectural instrument then becomes the necessary interceder between us passengers and how we see the world, the trigger or the friction or the hindrance to us starting to think. And as Rajchman states: ‘We always need interceders to open up new paths or sketch new lines in our lives.’ (Rajchman, 2000) It is these new paths or new lines that ‘Architecture’s provoking instrumentality’ is after, departing from the established and frozen paths, the predictable outcomes and the commonly accepted conceptions we normally think and act (and design) with.

‘Architecture’s provoking instrumentality’ can in this way inform in new ways its passengers – the world –, but also architectural practice, discipline and education. (In fact, it calls for a different educational model in architectural design, and ‘Explicit’ is a trial run in this effort.) To speak with Sanford Kwinter, ‘As design practice and thought are deflected away from the traditional and largely ‘aesthetically’ constituted object and simultaneously reoriented toward a dynamic macro- and micro-scopic field of interaction, an entirely new field of relations opens itself to the designer, theorist, or artist.’ (Kwinter, 2002)

All of this amounts to an implicit call for an architecture geared to relations and connections that generate meaning, and not for an architecture of fixed entities, testimonies of fixed meanings. Relations between the author (projecting designerly will, but also surrendering to contingencies), the user (projecting desires through experience and a subsequent thinking and acting) and the architectural instrument (with an agency of its own), all encompassed in the vast milieu we call the world.

In ‘Architecture’s provoking instrumentality’, it is not – only – that which is built that is important, but also that which the building makes possible, its performance.

Exemplifying this, the ‘Public House’ of Wim Cuyvers, built for the exposition ‘Beeld in het Park’ in 2003, comes to mind. A small interior space is placed in the fence of the Felix Happark in Brussels: an interposition between the restricted art exhibition in the park and the city surrounding the park. This small interior is not designed with itself as a goal, its goal lies in the ‘uses’ it provokes. The interior can and will be privatised by contingent passengers, homeless people, couples wanting to spend a forbidden night, playing children,… Aside being used, the interior in its use also becomes subject to debate, to objections and projections of fear: we don’t want this interior in our neighbourhood. In the end, the ‘Public House’ is abolished by the authorities. All these unforeseen uses are part of the interior’s performance within the world, and undermine our seemingly stable notion of ‘public space’.

‘Public House’, or how the interior is built in the border between two public spaces, to provoke uses and acts, as a negotiation on the notion ‘public space’. Photo from the book Tekst over Tekst, Wim Cuyvers
The idea of a ‘milieu’ to which the architectural instrument connects and is being connected to, affecting the passenger of the everyday, stood at the cradle of ‘Explicit’. It strengthened the belief that we as a studio should connect to and become performative in the real world, with real people, real desires and often contradicting and contingent forces running through it. One of the mantras of the studio logically then would be to operate outside the safe walls of the school environment and its representational scales: a clear call for an extra muros.

From its very inception, one of the aims sprouting from the research project ‘Architecture’s provoking instrumentality’ was to offer the students a concrete site in the Ghent urban fabric as an experimental space, with real urban conditions. A space to do research on the city and its issues, from the perspective of the interior architect, with his or her architectures as means to research. This space became for a while a meaningful ‘other’ place in the neighbourhood, provoking the contingent passengers as well as the residents, curious by the uncommon activity of the students’ building.

In the compilation of ‘Explicit’, the notion of extra muros was systematically introduced. Students visited researchers in their own habitats and/or exhibitions to discuss their research practices. Meetings of the research group were held at significant locations throughout the city. Themes that served as a basis for formulating research questions were proposed by the student-researchers only after they had spent much time on and around the urban site surrounding the place where the architectural instruments were to be built. One concrete site was put at the disposal of the student-researchers for them to use as a research atelier and as a building site. They were also invited to propose other actual sites if their installations would benefit from that.

This idea of an extra muros equally connects to the fundamentals of the research project ‘The architectural Uncanny’ or ‘Unheimlich’ organized in 2008-2009 (Unheimlich etymologically means: without home or, literally, un-homely). In order to awake the creative forces of the architectural ‘Uncanny’ within every student, we are operationally building on an extra-muros (or uncanny) logic. This deliberate de-familiarization towards the school environment makes it possible to take distance from particular emotions or habits. Students and tutors work offsite and visit places of research outside the school environment, thus experiencing real-life situations. This arguably stimulates the growth of awareness of an outside world with a different set of values than the ones you encounter in a classical educational environment.

Research into the ‘Uncanny’ or ‘Onheimelijk’ can benefit from working alternatively in educational environments and environments outside the educational sphere. This specific context both stimulates and necessitates students to operate outside the safe borders of their natural habitat, i.e. the school.

First meeting of the research group Explicit, in which the students themselves organized the functioning of their group. Held at ‘De Blauwe Peer’ (Architect Wim Cuyvers)

Discovery of some ‘alien’ horses in an industrial building on site, introducing to one group of researchers the idea of alienation and consequently connotation, which became their working theme.
From the point of view of ‘Architecture’s provoking instrumentality’, a one-on-one scale came to the fore as an essential element in the process of ‘worlding’, teaming up with both the idea of a milieu / extra muros and an active and performative instrumentality – the one-on-one scale being the only scale to test architecture’s ability to impact on the real world and its real passengers of the everyday.

The one-on-one scale provides an embodied experience, as opposed to the scaled and distanced representations normally used in educational models. This embodied experience then comes as an encounter, an event. The aim of ‘Explicit’. was not to present a finished end result for evaluation, as is the case in most educational exercises, but rather to open up the architectural instrument to an audience of passengers and test its performances. (The evaluating jury was one of these audiences).

For the designer-researcher of the architectures of ‘Explicit’ and their passengers, these architectures become instruments for carrying out experiments and research by design in search of new, ‘other’ bits of knowledge, not only to be used in building up the interior architectural discipline, but even more challenging, to build on the world, or better, on the way we see the world. The provoking architectures conceived and built question rather than answer, provoke thought to rise up and negotiation to occur. This negotiation processes renew fixed insights and values and provide us with new, ‘other’ values for thinking, acting and designing.

In ‘Explicit’, the student-researcher is challenged to make explicit what these new or ‘other’ values could be and, even more importantly, to determine how these new and ‘other’ values can be attained and what the specific role for the interior architect in this process of renewal can be.

The research into the ‘architectural Uncanny’ essentially comprises the constellation of three different research domains that are dynamically intertwined with one another: the domain of practice in education, the domain of practice in design, and the domain of theoretical understanding.

The theoretical ‘Uncanny’ originates in a profound and fundamental wonder about reality. This wonder intertwines with an existential anguish: paradoxically, uncertainty keeps wonder alive. ‘the architectural Uncanny’ operates in a specific framework: namely, that of phenomenology. More specifically: our existence is guided by the principle of being-towards-death (or ‘Sein zum Tode’) professing by Heidegger (Heidegger, 1927): this self-reflection upon our mortality opens up a ‘world-of-possibilities’. Next to producing artefacts and instruments (Homo Faber) and drawing images (Homo Pictor), man has developed a superior form of self-reflection: namely, the consciousness of his own mortality (Jonas, 1922). Furthermore, ‘the architectural Uncanny’ affects us in complex ways: it becomes an inclusive and affectionate facilitator of the architectural experience as rooted in time rather than in space.

While organizing the ‘Uncanny’ design studio in 2008, we asked ourselves: How can we utilize the modern sense of the ‘Uncanny’ in practice, i.e. in educational practice? It can be argued that the environment of the ‘Uncanny’ studio (Deckers 2008, 2009) has created an educational ‘Uncanny’, thus expanding on the productive interplay between anguish and architecture.

Initially, the ‘Uncanny’ studios had a different aim than that of the ‘Explicit’ studio. Their aim was to (re)present the outcomes of architectural design practice related to existential anguish. Still, it can be argued that through both studios – ‘Explicit’ and ‘Uncanny’ – we see the emergence of a research community consisting of both tutors and students.

In previous articles (Reflections 7, 9 and 14), we have already expanded on the implementation of the architectural ‘Uncanny’ into an educational environment by means of a specific educational model. This model helps us in understanding how the fugitive and invisible ‘Uncanny’ phenomenon can be specifically imported into the pedagogic realm of architecture. The model indicates and describes the collective growth of competence and care through the ‘Uncanny’. (Deckers, 2010)

This makes the educational ‘Uncanny’ a relatively safe but challenging, caring but competitive laboratory that strategically allows the ‘Uncanny’ to infiltrate into educational and ‘designerly’ practice. The educational ‘Uncanny’ can become a powerful environment that is able to empathically bind affectionate issues and temporal, fictional and technical constraints, thereby achieving a fragile balance in the triangle of education, design and theory of the ‘Uncanny’.

The ‘Uncanny’ studio stimulates an educational environment that is able to foster, produce and represent knowledge, while simultaneously instituting and propagating involvement and care. The research studio forms a temporary, small and intense research community where (often contradictory) values and types of knowledge are being shared, exchanged and created.
The research studio is a way to make students care and to be more aware that they are not just informing but also forming a body of research themselves. They are not just random passengers into a short design exercise, but they become active participants in a process of gaining knowledge and care thus allowing the emergence of something that we can qualify to be ‘social justice’.

The mediation between these themes [provoking instrumentality, milieu, encounter, event, 1/1 scale, extra muros, the search for ‘other’ values, the uncanny], produced the fertile ground from which ‘Explicit’ has sprung.

The question proposed to the student-researchers in ‘Explicit’ was twofold. They had to ‘design a research studio’ as well as to ‘design a research project’. In contrast to other design studios, where the end result is the most essential part of the evaluation, a lot of emphasis here was on the process of doing research, which meant asking questions such as how research can be done, which methods can be adopted, how can different methods be combined or personalized and made specific, how can the research process be furthered (by design), and how can it evolve or become altered. The student-researchers were asked to map the construction and course of their research.

As a prescribed method, the student-researchers were also asked to develop and build architectural research instruments on a 1/1 scale, with which they could experiment on their themes, on their research questions and on the audiences that encounter their instruments.

* structuring self propelling characteristics of Explicit

In this section of the article we want to shed light on the structuring characteristics of ‘Explicit’.

Before starting up the research studio, we envisaged operational criteria specifically designed to make the studio self-propelling. In general terms, we argue that the organization and program of the research studio is geared towards stimulating the action of small research groups of maximum three persons. The collection of all these subgroups forms a single research studio. We strive towards a symbiotic making (of artefacts) and thinking (about provoking instrumentalities and the architectural ‘Uncanny’) in the course of a limited period of time (14 weeks).

The fundamental aim of the research studio should be to enable the students to acquire (shared) responsibilities for choices made during the course of the 14 weeks. At the beginning of the studio, the students are asked to choose a particular research subject and to formulate a research question. In this way, the complexity and pressure can grow as the remaining course time grows shorter. The responsibility that the students deliberately take upon themselves facilitates the doing of research: metaphorically speaking, the research is ‘brought home’ or made ‘homely’.

The students are expected to function under time pressure in a multi-task environment. These tasks are chosen by the students and assigned by the tutors by common agreement. This parallel organization of the research studio takes on unexpected directions as research subgroups are formed, often with contradictory responsibilities and conflicting interests. The students are invited to willingly accept, tackle and/or challenge these differences.

The research studio has a natural interest in mapping and tracing the design process as it unfolds in the course of the 14 weeks: mapping this process is a time-based representation of knowledge building. The students are asked to carefully document and make a visual map of every design stage that they enter. This enables the external viewers to follow and identify the research community’s patterns of thought. The mapping also enables the individual student-researcher to reflect continuously upon their own and the others’ design processes.

A set of events structures the research studio. Every week participants are expected to perform a task: this compact set of deadlines, combined with a weighty list of collective and individual responsibilities, pressures and enables the groups and the individuals to produce outstanding and original results. The design studio is thus guided by a series of reoccurring events, ensuring structure, rhythm and set deadlines.

The participants and the (results of the) research and design processes are evaluated on an ongoing basis throughout the course of the ‘Explicit’ studio. The evaluation is separated into two blocks. In the morning, the students are individually reviewed and assessed. In the afternoon, the research groups are asked to present the last week’s progress. We have also conducted experiments of peer viewing by tutors and students through a web blog. An external jury finally evaluates the students’ work in the final week. This arguably adds up to the open and democratic nature of the research studio.

‘Explicit’ can be viewed as being self-propelled within the force fields of certain paradoxes:

* the paradox of risk seeking versus protection

Designing can be regarded as an activity directed towards protection and enclosure, but also as something that goes well beyond these ‘classical’ values: an intentional and relentless activity directed towards risks seeking (Deckers, 2010). By indulging in challenging deadlines and uncertainty, the Design Studio becomes a landscape for building up ‘other’ values, for demolishing prejudices, for the exchange of collective competence through the occurrence and (re)presentation of the different issues ( the architectural ‘Uncanny’, the provoking instrumentality of architectural furniture,...).

* the paradox of control versus improvisation

There is also an element of controlled improvisation: the formation of the norms and rules of the studio is continuously being balanced, checked and evaluated by all the participants throughout the course of the 14 weeks. If necessary, the rules or norms that were previously implemented can be adapted to any new given situation. This arguably creates an ethical space that regulates and ensures equality and social justice amongst the research community of students and tutors.
* **the paradox of the individual and the collective**

The formation of research subgroups makes students gradually aware of the necessity to share and critically evaluate the research and design processes, the methods that guide them and the results stemming from the early research questions and research themes. Students and tutors thus form **learning and caring communities** through intense cooperation and shared interests: such cooperation leads inevitably to competence building. Working in groups on research participants develop a sense of empathy, respect and care for the research studio as a whole. As teaching practitioners we believe that **participation and community building** is pivotal while designing a research project in an educational environment. Important decisions are not taken exclusively, but rather inclusively, both by the group and the tutors, because they concern the development of the studio as a whole. An intense group discussion prior to any decision taken ensures a sense of involvement, thus creating an affectionate and comfortable community open to dialogue and arguments. The horizontal hierarchy between tutors-researchers and students-researchers guarantees a sense of empathy and understanding. This horizontal approach ensures a durable exchange of knowledge rather than the unilateral import and export of pedagogic techniques.

Similar to this cooperative value building, one can also (almost naturally) discern an inherent force driving the design process: **designerly egocentrism**, or better, the concern for **unique and authentic authorship**. Stimulating this **designerly egocentrism** is as essential as is enabling the creation of **learning and caring communities**. In ‘Explicit’, these communities were facilitated structurally parallel to each other, in ever changing proportions. **Designerly egocentrism** is generative, stimulating progression in the course of the design studio, both widening and strengthening the research scope.

* **the paradox of promoting and abandoning the ego**

A similar, yet different paradox is operating in ‘Explicit’. The authorship is mediated not only between the research group and the individual researcher, but also between the researcher and the ‘audience’. The result of ‘Explicit’ is not (only) a balanced end result, but also the set-up of an event in which the architectural instruments are tested, and in which the experiences, interpretations and thoughts are captured for the purpose of feeding further experimentation. In the research project ‘Architecture’s provoking instrumentality’, the idea of negotiation, instrumentalized by architecture, is central. New knowledge or values are only produced in an encounter. This encounter is partly triggered by or composed out of the shaping will of the designer within his or her design, but moreover, it is constituted by the experience, by the thinking and acting triggered within each individual passenger (user). These passengers, always moving through the force fields of contingency, become vital co-creators of meaning or narrative. Contingency becomes a constitutive factor.

The formerly self-confident unique author thus has to cope with admitting and projecting other authors into his working process and, perhaps even more difficult, he has to cope with the unforeseeable role of contingency.

Exemplifying this, the co-authored project ‘The Gotham Handbook - Leviathan’, by Sophie Calle and Paul Auster, comes to mind. In the project, a phone booth at the corner of Greenwich and Harrison streets in Manhattan becomes the fixed receptacle for a multitude of contingencies and co-authorships, all proliferating from Auster’s initial ‘personal instructions’ to Calle, challenging her ‘to improve life in New York City’ on a given spot, for a given time.

The uses made of and the ultimate destruction of the ‘Public House’ in the case described above can also be seen as co-authored, impelled by contingencies.

The research project ‘The architectural Uncanny’ allows students and tutors to instrumentally shape their ‘designerly’ direction by working on their personal direction or profile as a designer/researcher. In view of the specific objectives, program and characteristics of the ‘Unheimlich’ studio, the participant can accordingly assert awareness of his or her position in life and society as a researcher.

The students are invited to design according to an ‘uncanny’ logic – i.e. taking distance from their respective ego, annihilating egotism and enabling them to think and work according to an informed intuition avoiding pre-set narratives. The drive towards marking an authorial signature is thus abandoned in favour of an empathic and unpredictable ‘ghost discourse’.
This article showed the emergence of the research studio 'Explicit', as a result of forces within the Sint-Lucas Department of Architecture and more specifically within the Academic Master’s Degree Program in Interior Architecture. It witnessed the mediation between two research projects in compiling the studio, coupling research expertise to the educational environment. In a next article, we will focus more on the specific results and processes developed in the studio.

**Karel Deckers and Johan Liekens**

**References:**

Architecture’s provoking instrumentality:


The architectural Uncanny:

Kenkyushitsu, or Design by Research


Europe and Japan are obviously quite different when it comes to education, urban conditions and architectural practice. Curiously enough, ‘universal’ European practice and theory are now standard subjects at any Japanese university, but reverse crossovers are rare and usually limited to descriptive research.

Based on a multitude of preexisting collaborations and common research interests, Sint-Lucas, the Ohno Laboratory at the University of Tokyo’s Graduate School of Frontier Sciences¹ (GSFS) and six² other European and Japanese partners initiated the AUSMIP³ pilot program in 2003. Recently extended⁴ until 2013, AUSMIP has accelerated and deepened these ties through regular exchanges of students and academic staff.

1 http://www.k.u-tokyo.ac.jp/pros-e/index-e.htm
2 The AUSMIP network consists of 8 partners;

Japanese Partners
1. The University of Tokyo, Dept. of Architecture, Graduate School of Engineering
2. The University of Tokyo, Institute of Environmental Studies, Graduate School of Frontier Sciences
3. Chiba University, Dept. of Architecture, Graduate School of Science and Technology
4. Kyushu University, Dept. of Urban Design and Planning. Graduate School of Human-Environmental Studies

European Community Partners
5. Hogeschool voor Wetenschap & Kunst, Sint-Lucas School of Architecture, Brussels, Belgium
6. Ecole Nationale Supérieure d’Architecture de Paris La Villette
7. Technische Universitaet Muenchen, Chair for Building Realization & Informatics
8. Faculdade de Arquitectura, Universidade de Lisboa.

3 The AUSMIP program is an EU-Japanese pilot exchange program in the field of Architecture and Urban Planning, initiated in 2003. EU students are typically exchanged for almost a full academic year during their final Masters year, which has resulted in the development of a special AUSMIP Master Module at Sint-Lucas.

4 The AUSMIP program received EACEA and JASSO subsidies for two years, after which the program was continued through JASSO and CoE funding of Tokyo and Kyushu Universities until 2009. In 2009, a new program, AUSMIP R&DaR, was approved for three years, again funded by the EACEA and JASSO. The continued exchange has so far (2010) resulted in the sending of about 150 Japanese and 135 European master’s students to/from Europe & Japan.
Bruno Peeters

During the past decade, both Japan and Europe have experienced major reforms in Higher Education, which have set into motion a quasi permanent transformation process. These reforms, which are still going on, have led to the implementation of experiments beyond established educational practice within an increasingly international and competitive environment. The ongoing AUSMIP exchange program has provided interesting insights into how the integration of Research, Design and Education has become an important issue at the GSFS and Sint-Lucas, and how to this day these issues remain open to a wide range of discussions, trials and adjustments.

At the University of Tokyo, architecture traditionally is organized within the Faculty of Engineering. When Western architecture was originally introduced in Japan and first taught at the University of Tokyo it was a novel field, and its historic focus was rather on the technological and engineering. It was only gradually that design education became more independent and less subservient to this tradition.

The Ausmip Consortium

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6 Japan’s transition from the feudal to the modern era, involving the abolishment of the Tokugawa Shogunate and the restoration of Imperial Rule; see also; http://aboutjapan.japansociety.org/content.cfm/the_meiji_restoration_era_1868-1889.
8 http://www.arwu.org/ARWU2010.jsp
9 The Department of Socio-Cultural Environmental Studies was established in 1999 within the Graduate School of Frontier Sciences, which was founded in 1998 and included only one division at that time.
10 http://www.k.u-tokyo.ac.jp/pros-e/sbk-e/index-e.htm

The first modern Japanese university, the University of Tokyo was established in 1877, only a few years after the Meiji Reformation of 1868. From its inception, this University took on its role as the leading academic institution of Japan. Academic research was to become the University’s core activity, being a key strategic instrument within the overall modernization process and education of the new elite in Japan. Today, with a student population of 28,000, the University of Tokyo is comprised of 22 faculties at the undergraduate level, or a total of 35 faculties including the graduate schools and graduate level research institutes.

The annual overall science and technology research budget is about 16.4 billion yen, which finances nearly 3,000 research projects. The University of Tokyo is the highest ranked, non-Anglo–Saxon institution on the Shanghai Jiao Tong Academic Ranking of World Universities. Higher education is organized into a progression of 4-, 2- and 3-year modules, with an undergraduate professional program of 4 years leading to a full undergraduate degree. Unique in Japan, the undergraduate program is compromised of a 1.5-year liberal arts program that is compulsory for all students, followed by a 2.5-year period focusing on the professional education.

Graduate education is organized into a 2-year research-oriented master’s program, and a subsequent PhD program extending over another three years. The Department of Architecture, first established in 1872, has about 60 students per study year, with four graduate schools organizing courses in architecture at the undergraduate level.

In 1998 the new trans-disciplinary Faculty of Frontier Sciences was established. Incorporating design, the GSFS consists of three divisions, Trans-Disciplinary Sciences, Biosciences and Environmental Studies, all aimed at developing innovative fields of research through restructuring disciplines.

At the GSFS, one of the main pedagogical challenges was to integrate the different design studios covering those areas of research relevant to the new faculty. This led to the establishment of the Integrated Environmental Design Program (IEDP), a conglomeration of six design studios – Man-Made Environment, Architecture, Urban Planning, Urban Agriculture, Farming, and Forest Management – among which students can freely choose their own personal program.

Even though the University of Tokyo already accommodated many different design studios, often resulting in students being trained for highly specialized professions,
design studios are usually confined within their respective departments. Exceptionally, within the IEDP certain groups of design studios are all located and co-organized at a single location, thus enabling ongoing interaction with the neighboring disciplines.

This integration process involved the transfer of entire units and laboratories into the new GSFS faculty, which was established at the new Kashiwa campus. Accordingly, the Ohno Laboratory moved from the Department of Architecture, Graduate School of Engineering, into the GSFS’s Socio-Cultural Environmental Studies Department, thus coalescing humanities, civil engineering, architecture and urban planning.

Apart from the mainly education-oriented IEDP design studios, the integration of design and research was also organized from the beginning within the existing format of the ‘Kenkyushitsu’, or laboratories.

Kenkyushitsu
An established tradition in the system of higher education, the Kenkyushitsu is typically a research unit, supporting research and education in the Graduate Schools in Japan. It usually consists of a leading professor, assistants and researchers, as well as the graduate students. Even for students with a major in design, writing a thesis is mandatory, and it concludes their two years of master’s research, tutored by the professor and assisted by senior students. Expressed in ECTS credits based on a two-year 120 credit master’s program, research work, covering on average 4 semesters, accounts for 48 credits, and the presentation and final grading account for another 24 credits, the two of which together comprise 60% of all Master’s credits. The students’ involvement in the Kenkyushitsu is very extensive but not exclusive, as they can take other lectures or design studios by other professors.

Identification with the laboratory is quite strong and, apart from being a collective research platform, the Kenkyushitsu also serves as a central platform for social bonding. Each Kenkyushitsu has its own facilities, equipment and working space and operates independently within its department.

In fields with a strong tradition in scientific research, the Kenkyushitsu usually develop their own lines of research, similar to the way research institutes do this, and students are assigned certain parts of the research work.

Ohno Kenkyushitsu
Embedded within the GSFS trans-disciplinary strategy, the Ohno laboratory developed a special interest in the issue of ‘shrinkage’. This led to the development of an alternative urban model, ‘fibercity’\(^{11}\), which has been developed consistently since 2000\(^{12}\) by the Ohno Kenkyushitsu, and has also served as the main concept for all uAD-Brussels\(^{13}\) design assignments since 2005.

\(^{11}\) http://www.fibercity2050.net/
\(^{12}\) For a comprehensive overview, see Tokyo 2050 fibercity, 2006, The Japan Architect 63, Shinkenchiku-Sha
\(^{13}\) Bruno Peeters; ‘Fibercity Flanders’, 2008, uAD studio publication.
Though many developed nations are currently contemplating the rapid ageing of their population in the future, in the case of Japan\(^{14}\) this rapid aging and shrinking of the population has already become a present reality. Investment in construction, which still represents a disproportionately large share of the overall economy compared to other advanced countries,\(^{15}\) is now rapidly shrinking. Thus, ‘standard cure’ Keynesian policies\(^{16}\) of the successive Japanese governments, which have been applied for decades to stimulate the economy through investment in construction, have become untenable.

Japan’s hitherto unilateral focus on growth, combined with a very liberal planning instrument, has left a legacy of vast urban sprawl and anomic suburban areas, defying traditional urban planning.

Shrinking, not necessarily related to an immediate population decrease, but rather concerning the much wider global environmental crisis, became the major issue and topic of research within the Ohno Kenkyushitsu, and the question from the designer’s point of view as to how to respond to this issue has required an approach that goes beyond standard practice or expansionist scenarios.

\(^{14}\) For a more detailed analysis of Japan’s demographic and environmental crisis, see Hidetoshi Ohno, pages 209-239 in ‘La Ville Fibre’ in ‘Mobilité et Ecologie Urbaine’, directed by Alain Bourdin, Descartes & Cie, 2007.

\(^{15}\) OECD average 6.74 %, US 3.8%, Japan 10.3%; http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/32/55/41765075.pdf


Within the Ohno Kenkyushitsu, the hitherto ‘classic’ growth-based educational curriculum for future planners and architects lost its relevance, necessitating an avant-garde attitude among the educators and the introduction of new frontiers into architectural design education through research. This new vision is of crucial importance, and its incorporation into the laboratory’s approach to design education has profoundly changed the way things are done at the GSFS.

However, the linking up of research and design cannot be taken for granted, since, as in any field, hypotheses must be formulated and tested through a process of exposure and making the outcomes available to a wider audience. Such a method is very difficult to realize in architecture or planning, since no conditions or criteria exist, as they do, for instance, in STM research & publishing.

Instead, design development has come to function as a testing ground, and the students’ proposals are the result of experiments carried out in cooperation with the professors in an effort to create new value within an uncertain context. Efforts to attain an optimal balance and integration between education and research have posed major challenges, resulting in the establishment of an integrative research and design platform within the Ohno Kenkyushitsu.

Kenkyushitsu, or Design by Research

At the University of Tokyo, research is still for the most part exclusively a scientific tool, and this approach still defines the methodology of the Kenkyushitsu, though it is unusual for design faculties, which tend to focus on individual ‘projects’ rather than on the advancement of a collaborative research project. Pursuing such a collective undertaking requires a different attitude regarding the pedagogical role of the design project as it is known within conventional architectural education. Hence, within the Ohno Kenkyushitsu the focus has shifted from individual design projects, determined by collective design aims, to individual assignments and research, which itself is intended to direct and codetermine broader research aims.

As students in the Kenkyushitsu have diverse capabilities and interests, the collective result of their different research efforts leads to a steady process of development, which would be impossible if their design and/or research efforts were to be organized on the basis of more traditional, predetermined assignments dictating the same (design) parameters for all students.

For example, one student, who is particularly gifted in design, conceived a new type of bus as part of a mobility study for the fibercity research model. Another student, who excels in statistics and mathematics, configured the bus routes using a cost-benefit analysis. In an even more analytical research project, the effects of urban compactness on carbon dioxide emissions were calculated. Capacitating the ability of design through analysis is thus a key issue within the Ohno Kenkyushitsu.

However, similar to traditional design education which is primarily project based, the specificity of the design studios, in combination with long-term research and educational projects, carries an innate risk, namely, that the leading professor becomes...
the ultimate reference and authority, and is therefore inclined to confirm his own research hypothesis or model. To this extent, it was crucial for both IEDP design studios and the Ohno Laboratory to reach out and allow external verification beyond faculty borders. Principally, this is achieved through the dissemination of results at the UDCK, a unique collaboration between academia, local citizens, government, professionals and developers.

**UDCK**

Being a new faculty, the GSFS is located in the town of Kashiwa-No-Ha, where the new and third campus of the University of Tokyo was established, as part of a series of important public, commercial and housing developments along the Tsukuba Express commuter line. Under impulse of the late Professor Kitazawa, the University of Tokyo, Chiba University, the municipality of Kashiwa and the Mitsui Real Estate Company, which is doing the urban development in the area, established the Urban Design Center Kashiwa, or UDCK. Addressing issues of common concern, consulting city authorities and supporting citizens who are active in the promotion of their neighborhood, the UDCK has developed into a platform for the exchange of ideas. Remarkably, the UDCK has its own building, which serves not only as a meeting place to foster local neighborhood culture, but has become a place for education as well; the IEDP design studios are organized here, and they are permanently accessible to the local public. Juries and presentations are attended by citizens, experts and city officials, all of whom express their opinions about the students’ works.

**Relevance beyond GSFS**

The complex and reversive relationship of shrinkage to conventional design and planning led the GSFS and Ohno Kenkyushitsu to integrate design into research based on an established research tradition such that their approach can be characterized as ‘Design by Research’. As for education, the implementation of design through analysis is indispensable for any designer/architect confronted with such complex societal issues. Moreover, design through analysis has allowed the Ohno Kenkyushitsu to develop a consistent body of research over the past 10 years and longer, the conclusions of which can be found in its annual research reports.17 Extensively published outside Japan, the fiberocity concept has not only served as an incubator for IEDP and uAD assignments, but has also become an international exchange platform.19 In 2007, fiberocity was further developed in collaboration with the city of Nagaoka, and in 2009 a fiberocity-based alternative was presented for the city of Paris20 by the AUC21 Consortium, further establishing its relevance beyond the faculty.

At Sint-Lucas, the ‘Research by Design’ approach highly values the designer’s capacity to explore potentialities and advance solutions through design, but this is still mainly

17 Ohno Hidetoshi: Towards the fiberocity, an investigation of sustainable city form, 2004, MPF Press, Ohno Laboratory, Graduate School of Frontier Sciences, Tokyo University.
18 In 2007 fiberocity was the main topic of two conferences, one held at the University of Tokyo and another, called ‘shrinking cities x fiberocity @ akihabara’, held by means of a series of ‘talk-ins’ at the UDX Akihabara. In 2008, it was also presented and exhibited at the Hong-Kong Shengzen Biennale.
20 The French Government invited eight international consortia to present a future ‘post-Kyoto’ vision for greater Paris. See also http://www.legrandparis.culture.gouv.fr/
21 See www.laucparis.com
limited to traditional project assignments. The still embryonic link between research, research groups and the design-studio restrains the possibilities for developing longer-term research through design studios. In this respect, the Kenkyushitsu might possibly serve as a potential model for better aligning research groups and interests within the different Master’s programs.

The transformation of the Ohno Laboratory and its incorporation into Frontier Sciences also fits within the larger ‘tri-polar’ strategy of the University of Tokyo, whereby it allocates each of its campuses specific roles. For example, the Hongo Campus, where the Department of Architecture is located, focuses on traditional studies in specialized fields; the Komaba Campus is concerned mainly with (undergraduate) education and research, and activities at the Kashiwa Campus, by way of contrast, are centered on the pursuit of “intellectual adventure” and the stimulation of trans-disciplinary research.

While obviously of a much smaller scale and limited to design departments only, such campus-based specialization might equally generate potentials in the case of Sint-Lucas, especially in view of its future integration into the Faculty of Architecture & the Arts at the University of Leuven.

Bruno Peeters
This contribution to Reflections is in fact the probable preface to a research thesis investigating the theme of architectural ‘propaganda’. As an introduction, it states different perceptions of the writings of Beatriz Colomina, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, John Dewey, Otto Neurath, Nigel Cross, Edward R. Tufte, Dirk De Meyer on Giambattista Piranesi, etc… all of whom emphasize the importance of graphics as a qualitative communication mass medium to the lay public. This contribution will legitimize further analysis and normative research dealing with the mass media of Belgian comics, architecture photography, film and children’s books. The stated research proposal, ‘Utopias explored’, questions whether there is [a way to design] a mass medium by which children and adults can be educated about architecture implicitly and passively, so they can carry the knowledge and experience of the education as a joyful adventure.

Power of the Image

Inspired by the urge of contemporary society to stick a label on the majority of (young) individuals, the American handbook entitled Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) draws up a list of development and learning disabilities. Apart from the most commonly known conditions such as ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), dyslexia, dysorthografia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, dyspraxia and the somewhat less well known HSP (Highly Sensitive Person) and NLD (Nonverbal Learning Disorder), the striking ‘picture thinker’ condition or disability attracts our attention immediately. Elke Pelemans of the Praktijk van Verbinding describes the phenomenon as follows: “Picture thinking is thinking in images and events. It is a spatial way of thinking; three dimensional, rapid and chaotic. If you imagine that you can think 32 images a second and only two words a second, it is obvious that thinking in images is faster than thinking in words.”

But... just as with most of the other above mentioned ‘illnesses’, the question pops up: aren’t we all like that? Picture thinking or visual thinking is a basic characteristic of mankind. It is the natural form of absorbing, processing and applying sensory observations. Picture thinking is something we all do. The degree to which and the way in which we do it is defined by the personal characteristics and the tendencies and development of the body processes. Admittedly, the usual linear and deductive learning methods of instruction and lots of other institutions do not match this way of thinking. Not surprisingly, different art forms have been/are treated as excesses, while they encourage the lay public to reflect on all kinds of issues, either without or with a limited number of words, whether critical or not.
One beautiful example is the sharp cartoons of the Romanian artist Dan Perjovschi, which decorate multiple unexplored corners and unattainable locations of museums all over the world. As an opposite of this ‘humorous’ moral delousing of Perjovschi, I would like to enroll the more ‘academic’ picture created by the young Belgian photographer Filip Dujardin. His images from the series fictions could be described as tropes like repetition, metonymy and inversion unleashed on buildings. By presenting both “images of constructions” and “constructions of images”, the work of Dujardin invokes both recognition and alienation. By pushing the reality value of the repetitive images to the extreme, he lets the unsuspecting spectator think soberly about the absurdity of certain Belgian architectural situations.

1 Dan Perjovschi is a visual artist who mixes drawing, cartoon and graffiti in artistic pieces drawn directly on the walls of museums and contemporary art spaces. His drawings comment on current political, social or cultural issues. www.perjovschi.ro

In a prescriptive, normative research project on architecture, it seems appropriate both to quote and to interpret architecture historian Beatriz Colomina in ‘Privacy and Publicity’: “To enter is to see. The modern transformation of the house produces a space defined by walls of (moving) images. This is the space of the media, of publicity. To be ‘inside’ this space is only to see. To be ‘outside’ is to be in the image, to be seen, whether in the press photograph, a magazine, a movie, on television, or at your window. […]

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche also writes in ‘The Uses and Abuses of History’: “We moderns [have become] walking encyclopedias. From the collage of fleeting images assembled as the reader moves through too much material, too many images, too many stimuli. And isn’t this precisely the experience of the city? Such a promenade necessarily involves a transformation of our sense of architecture. The new space of the city in which it is experienced, cannot be separated from the new forms and technologies of representation.”

Both of these prominent authors emphasize the importance of media to enrich architectural awareness. A promenade during an organized Architecture Day or introductory teaching materials for high schools is not enough. Media – especially in this contemporary culture based on images and communication – have such an overwhelming power that it cannot be denied that they are a very useful tool for communicating messages linked to architecture theory that can help the lay public to understand and to develop the architectural world around them in a more reasoned way.

Colomina continues: “The building should be understood in the same terms as drawing, photographs, writing, films and advertisements; not only because these are the media in which we more often encounter it, but because the building is a mechanism of representation in its own right. It is actually the emerging systems of communication that came to define twentieth century culture – the mass media – that are the true sites within which modern architecture is being produced and with which it directly engages. In fact, one could argue that modern architecture only becomes modern in its engagement with the media.”

Throughout its various trajectories, ‘Privacy and Publicity’ talks mainly about Modernism, but the stated theories are equally applicable to contemporary architecture and media. The book is not so much concerned with the relationship between architecture and the media as with the possibility of thinking of architecture as media or even of thinking of media as architecture. All of the writing in the research proposal is in, on and around the gaps. It is of course even about these gaps, often being obsessed by them. Iconic examples of mass media from other countries will serve as a backdrop and as a well of knowledge and experience.

A descriptive study involving browsing through different kinds of media underlines the fact that images (such as drawings, comics, film and architecture photography) are more effective for reinforcing theory and producing knowledge transfer than
text. This can be documented by a quotation from architecture historian Dirk De Meyer in *Piranesi. De Prentencollectie van de Universiteit Gent*: “A free etching technique excerpted from Tiepolo, a dramatic use of light and shadow, a density of composition and optical distortions make Piranesi’s representations so different from the ‘more scientific’ images of architects and archeologists. But Piranesi also confronts conceptually – in the wake of what Giambattista Vico prescribes in his *Principi di una scienza nuova* (1744) – the clear and different ideas of rationalism with the logic of the imagination. […] In his *La istoria universale* Bianchini argues that images are more effective for transferring knowledge than text. Moreover, “they help the emotions”. His own illustrations organize artefacts like mnemotechnical tools within the content of each chapter. The reconstructions by Piranesi, but also his juxtapositions of information, images and representation techniques that are often comparable with windows on a computer screen, are clearly tributary to these innovative ideas.”

With this introduction to picture thinking in the ‘popular’ and ‘fine’ arts, I touch on the theoretical theorem of the American philosopher, psychologist and educational reformer John Dewey, who tries to abate the difference between ‘pragmatical’ and ‘esthetical’ art in *Art As an Experience*. He wants to free the artisan and the popular audience of their servitude to a system that denies them the opportunity to fully appreciate the esthetic qualities of either the fine or the useful arts. For Dewey it is “living in the experience of making and perceiving” that makes art art, and the perceiver has his/her responsibility for transforming the act of encountering a work of art into one that might contribute “directly and liberally to an expanding and enriched life.” It is the experience of the work, not the work per se, that expands and enriches. It gets interesting when Dewey is brought together with the leading Austrian philosopher of science, sociologist, and political economist Otto Neurath. Neurath, developer of the pictorial language ISOTYPE in 1935, believed that ‘common’ forms of entertainment such as popular films and cartoons offered museum curators and educators a new and powerful platform for dispensing scientific information2. According to Neurath, mass forms of communication were superior because they could reach broader audiences and required less concentration and energy. A cross-pollination between the two philosophers leads to the statement that the experience of popular (or fine) arts, which visualize invisible phenomena (social and economic processes) and are distributed through mass forms of communication, could raise self-awareness within the lay public, thus enriching their lives. A statement I would like to use as a starting point for my research proposal.

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Dominique Pieters

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In January 2010 MWM* defined its “extended drawing” concept and project within the confines of KU-Leuven's IvOK** program. The project officially departed on its venture in September 2010. In a nutshell, “extended drawing” is an inquiry into image manipulations of embryonic (design) drawings and into whether the treating of images has a possible influence on designerly processes. In order to explore its thesis, the project defined several research tools: drawing rudiments (basic movements within designerly drawing), conceptualising architectural cases (to test manipulative processes), installing a MWMWorkshop (to carry out research into different manipulative processes) and to delineate a theoretical framework based upon the practical implications of the aforementioned tools and the thesis of improvised movements within the designer drawing process. The project has both a personal and an educational component, and all the different tools and components work together to inspire each other's elaboration. What follows is to be considered a work in progress, an account of some of the things that are currently shaping the project and its thinking.

*Messing With Media

**Instituut voor Onderzoek in de Kunsten / Institute for Research in the Arts
Dear reader,

"MWM, as a research concept, is considered to be a plural entity. MWM* defines and develops its "extended drawing" project and both the concept and the project are fuelled by "®" as an individual researcher. Confusing as it may sound, in the following pages, the vantage points may possibly jump from first to second to third person, which won't help the confusion. One must keep in mind that within the project, different writing directions and altering vantage points are considered to be an integral part of the investigations.

Q: What have you been up to lately?

◊ drawing

The extended drawing project explicitly mentions re-examining the practice of drawing through, in a way, re-learning how to draw. So I bought myself a daybook, some pens, some pencils and started drawing (again). Drawing things around me, drawing design, drawing curricular assignments, drawing for fun, drawing to confront myself with my inability to draw (certain things) well. The idea is to draw (as much as time allows me) in order to practise skills, to test things defined within the project, to explore curricular assignments, and to get immersed in the medium of (designerly) drawing. The act is both confronting and inspiring. Confronting, because after a period of more or less theoretical explorations within the medium it became apparent that some skills had been lost and needed serious practising. Inspiring, because, on the one hand, this loss of skills enables one to approach the medium once again as if one has to start afresh, but beyond that, it seems that every new drawing brings new insights to the fore which, once again, open up new pathways for inquiry, whether practically or theoretically.

◊ designing

"Extended drawing" is about drawing within design. This means the project needs designerly problems to inspire the drawing and thinking process. A few months ago Alcazaba (an alter ego of a friend of mine) returned from a tropical island where he had stubbornly purchased a plot of land upon which he intended to build a retreat. I agreed to help through providing ideas for this venture and decided to use the project as a preliminary test case for the extended drawing project. And what a test it was... Through accepting Alcazaba's "jazz rock project", the "extended drawing"-thesis experienced its first head-on attack.

It was clear from the beginning that designing the Alcazaba-hut would be an imaginary process. Alcazaba – being the DIY-man able to work with wood and steel at high speeds and at extremely low costs – wasn't looking for a set of top-down predefined architectural drawings, but rather for a creative second opinion to inspire thinking. When I started sketching ideas, we had already discussed some ideas around a dinner table. From our conversations it was clear that he needed a thematic structure to work around and to serve as a basis for his improvisation. I tried to focus on an easy to build system on a spread within the daybook forcing myself to stack sketches and drawings on top of each other until a moment of designerly satisfaction dawned. I then concluded the process by setting things down on paper in some scaled drawings. Looking at the finished drawings, I realised it was devoid of any messing with media, not to mention the total absence of extended drawing: whatsoever! All I had produced were preliminary representations of a simple hut.

* MWM = messing with media
How was I to conceive of this damned PHD, which is based upon the idea of creative layering of media, when my own intuitive process was driving me to a single medium? While I was dealing with disappointment at the final drawings, I convinced myself to drag the drawings over to Alcazaba’s palace to discuss the ideas. In the end, the drawings inspired a new thinking process and a more or less clearly defined conceptual point of view. Alcazaba proposed to shape the thing akin to the shack he had built on his previous trip. The process of drawing his basic concept (without seeing the image of the model he had sent me) confronted me with an echo of something I had designed some years before, and this echo realigned the drawing process and made me start modelling and shaping a new form based on the material qualities of corrugated iron.

Since the learning process of spatial and perspective drawing is driven by the geometrics of the cube as a basic unit, MWM invented an arbitrary process in which cubes are worked and reworked until they become walls, floors, stairs, etc., and finally, to add a notion of scale, a (moving) human body. The process forces one to jump between different modes of representation in order to get a grip on the form and space without breaking any of the exercise’s rules. Since MWM designed this thing, we forced ourselves to become active participants, as well. Keeping track of the assignments through executing them and trying to stay a step ahead of the official participants we discovered difficulties and possible mistakes that one can make, in addition to learning how to approach certain things within the exercise. This is a role that enriches the exercise and what it is meant to teach, since a lot of the participants’ problems were the ones we had encountered the night before. Up until now, 14mm seems to be doing what it was designed to do, apart from some minor aspects that we will have to work on. The only thing that is presently missing is the infusion of digital actions into the process. The red tape involved in organising courses within academic confines and the switching of professors, classrooms and vantage points appeared to be making this infusion unnecessarily difficult. As we are searching for a design-driven process to approach architectural media, every step, every tool, and every medium is an integral part of the creative process. Incorporating a digital component means actively thinking about (a part of) the process through the use of digital possibilities and convincing a colleague to become an active part within a designerly process too, which requires that the people involved be capable of approaching the exercise both from a technical and from a designerly point of view.

14mm: a curricular test

Sometime last year MWM was invited to collaborate on rethinking the way our department introduces architectural novices to the craft of (re-)presenting architectural form, space and design. Suddenly, things we had been thinking about for quite some time became very real. As we sat down with a colleague to discuss a new structure over coffee and some sandwiches, we agreed that: design would have to be the driving force within the assignments. By the end of the afternoon, we had arrived at an open scheme to inspire thinking about possible assignments, after which we parted and somehow lost contact. Around August, feeling the pressure of the coming semester, a roll of paper was unpacked; thereby starting up a process of thinking and drawing which initiated the basic layout of what is now officially called ‘14mm’.

It’s goal? To introduce fresh students to the art of imagining architecture through playfully exploring form and space. 14mm is conceived as a kind of a game that jumps from model making, projective drawing, perspective drawing and communicating design through carving and folding your way through architectural form and space. Each step adds formal, spatial and anthropomorphical complexity to the process.

trying out an arbitrary folding process within 14MM:, a first attempt to lay out the exercise’s basic movements

Alcazaba’s temporary shack and his model of the basic idea for the final hut and my sketchy reply to the model.
Radimately 14\text{mm} is made up of 3 steps: It starts with carving one’s way through a model made up of 30 cubes. Each cube retrieved has to be reintroduced either on top of the model or, above the first layer on the short side of the model. Next to delineating horizontal and vertical circulation, this step defines a basic geometry of the model leading to a certain formal design. After this first step is illustrated by means of drawings and models, a new problem is given: one has to rework the cube model as two folded strips based on the prior (cuboid) model. The circulation route has to be kept as a void within the two strips, and the strips should be made to follow, if possible, the basic geometry of the former model. Each strip has to touch the back and front of the defining planes, and the strips may touch but may not overlap. In order to fold a new model, the participants have to switch between plan, section, model and sketches; thereby creating a model made up out of walls, floors and circulation. As a final step (not shown in the drawings), the participants introduce a notion of human scale through adding parapets, human silhouettes and (optionally) abstracted furniture. The exercise concludes with a large scale presentation of the process through finalised presentation plans and a sketchbook showing the intermediary operations.

Ultimately, to keep things within limits we decided to approach the digital realm as a separate module within the course. Hopefully next year the administrators will provide us with a more flexible schedule, which could open up opportunities for a more open structure within the exercise, thus enabling us to easily jump media driven by the game or process. Sometime in February 2011 we will introduce the follow-up of 14\text{mm}–24\text{mm}. Where 14\text{mm} has already proven that game structures are able to force participants to think between media in order to discover form and space, we are now in the process of designing and inventing a similar, design driven, scheme for 24\text{mm}, all the while keeping in mind that 24\text{mm} involves a very ambitious and wide scope of media and techniques...

\section*{Initializing the \textit{mwmworkshop}}

Within every account we hope to show some output of what was previously known as the \textit{MWM-lab}. Again we have to disappoint you. It seems that the only thing we can share about the matter is a conceptual name change. While reading Richard Sennett’s views on medieval workshops as institutions to motivate craftsmanship, it became clear to us that the concept of the workshop fitted our intentions better than the scientifically laden concept of the laboratory. According to Sennett, within craft workshops several people work(ed) together towards a collective goal, augmenting each other’s skills through exchanging the skills of the craft- and tacit knowledge. Thus the craft developed and evolved through doing this within a more or less contained environment. Through messing with media and extending the drawing process, our goal is to expand the concept of architectural drawing and release it from its narrow vision of resolution, production and economics by working together on the material, images and ideas at hand. Our poster on the next page is an effort to summarise the aims of the \textit{MWMWorkshop}.

So where are we at? Well, it seems that installing something like an analogue lab within a departmental structure takes a lot of patience and convincing in order to get the green light and some sort of a budget to start equipping it. The nerves and frustration of repeatedly going through the administrative mumbo jumbo to get something done was one of the driving forces that pushed us back to drawing, because at least this was something we could do while waiting for yet another response to an application we had submitted for some departmental funding. In the end all we need is some of that hard cash necessary to start looking for machinery. Since most of the material we are looking for is to be found in second-hand markets, it’s quite necessary to have a clear and complete budget so that we can easily respond to the opportunities that present themselves. Up until now, there is neither a space nor a budget-only concepts.

*see Richard Sennett: The Craftsman [Yale University Press, 2008]*
The MWMWorkshop poster. The main idea is to fill a space with different machines, interfaces and tools in order to create a place where one can improvise with architectural drawings in its widest sense in order to inquire whether changes and alterations within drawings can influence the evolution of an embryonic designerly conception.

**The media research group!**

Next to looking for means to outfit our workshop, we’re currently organising a collaboration with Ghent MiMeLab with which we have collectively defined a research group encompassing both campuses for the purpose of studying the uses and abuses of hybrid media. In November we got together for the first time to share our views with a group of interested colleagues. This meeting unintentionally sparked a lively discussion on the status of the research group within the larger environment of the mixed media course group. While we had organised the meeting to inform and gather potential allies in order to get started with the project, the discussion focussed upon the consequences of narrowing our attention down to media as the focal point of our research group and whether we should expand our framework to include a larger pool of researchers within the research group. The “media” research group was initiated in part because we seemed to be meeting within a growing field of inquiry and to be feeling an urge to manifest our department within that field. Our focus on process and the role media plays within that process delineates a broad area of potential research concepts and projects we are studying from an architectural point of view. Our humble goal is to fuse projects within a specific field of knowledge by linking up researchers who are interested in the creative use and abuse of intermediary tools within designerly processes. In addition to bringing together and collaborating with similar minded people, the research group intends to develop as a community within the growing faculty research pool through being made responsible for a specific research area within this larger entity. Within this view, the “lab -spaces” are considered to be meeting places and workshops within both campuses, which are collaborating to explore, stimulate and produce tenacious research(ed) output. While the department’s structure forces us to consider two separate spaces (one for each campus), our personal interests and areas of emphasis have led us to define two complementary units. Within the Brussels campus, MWM conceptualises an analogue workshop focused on on drawing as a generator of design, while MiMe—Ghent has installed a more digitally oriented lab that focuses on the physical and virtual model and its role within design. Both workshops cross over from digital to analogue and back again, and are intended to inspire each other’s elaboration.
Returning to the practice of drawing could be understood as a form of woodshedding: inquiring and practising things in order to broaden a personal vocabulary and skills. The daybook, then, becomes a woodshed. Every other week, some of those typical drawing instruction books are scanned in search of information, skills and techniques for developing a set of drawing rudiments (basic movements within designerly drawing). Within the project, the rudiments are considered to be a means of freeing oneself from certain constraints when working drawingly towards design conceptions. Instead of focusing on accurateness, extended drawing searches for intuitive knowledge within one’s possibilities for drawing and reworking designerly ideas.

14 mm has hints of improvisation as well. Since the exercise concerns learning to visualise design and architecture, we searched for ways to minimise the actual practice of designing, while keeping design as a generator of the drawings and images. The gamesque structure forces participants to accept previous steps and build upon them. In a sense the participants are improvising with form and space. Up until now we have not explicitly communicated 14 mm’s improvised qualities in order to avoid a certain confusion about the core of the exercise. The inventing and starting up of a new learning process creates a certain wariness and it seemed to us that mentioning research related preoccupations would run the risk of hampering the process altogether.

So what’s next? As mentioned earlier on, the act of drawing and exploring design seems to be inspiring new directions within the project. Unintentionally, the Alcazaba process, which was initiated as a preliminary design case, gave rise to a conceptual stance regarding a further development of possible design cases within the project. Before we dwell on this matter any further, we should note that what follows is based on a very intuitive hunch, a blurry under-researched hunch for that matter, but nevertheless also a promising one.

Alcazaba’s new scheme instigated a change in conceptual and stylistic vantage point, which called for another generating medium and process. It also forced us to think about and work with a wider array of media, as opposed to the monodisciplinary drawings of the previous phase. The shift gave rise to the question as to whether stylistic points of view channalise technical or media improvisation and, if so, is it something one can approach consciously or is it full blown intuition, whatever that may mean?

From there on, we were thrown back to the concept of eclecticism: “deriving ideas, style, or taste from a broad and diverse range of sources” (Oxford Dictionary), or the idea of being elusive to catalogue and listing as a certain quality of personality rather than as a proof of a lack of creativity or even charlatanism. Translating the concept into extended drawing led to the idea of defining our cases as (virtual) projects arbitrarily linked to certain stylistic vantage point(s). The architectural styles would then become vehicles for inspiring designerly directions, with the stylistic elements being treated as loose thematic structures to be played around.
with. Admittedly, infusing style into design is a tricky concept that calls for taking a firm stance towards its formalistic connotations. But, again, the idea is preliminary and fuzzy, but through reflecting upon the idea of eclecticism within the project we got an echo of the drawing we have used to introduce the conference zine... that’s when we thought why not throw that concept into the project as well [to be continued]®

http://associatie.kuleuven.be/fak/doctoraatsprojecten.html#robs
Abstract

While following the RTS sessions, I was looking for research forms and research themes that could suite me, and I was trying to find out how I could proceed with my research project. I was introduced to research methods from different angles, and I tested (or tried out) the different aspects of research related working methods that were presented to me. While doing this, my practice as a visual artist always remained my referential framework. The only thing I knew for sure when I started the RTS sessions was that my artistic work had to be the point of departure for my research (see sketches on previous pages).

During the last few months I've decided to concentrate on my practice. I've decided to investigate how to establish a serious and relevant research framework based on my practice and working method. My way of investigating this in the first stage of the process was to halt my working process from time to time and to record a few intermediate stages in the creation process by means of photos and film. These recorded moments (or 'snapshots', so to speak) draw a picture of the way I work, take decisions, make choices etc., and can provide information on different aspects of my working method. They reveal my criteria for making choices.

During the GRC/Toonmoment (peer group reviewed presentation moment) of November 2010 I talked about the intermediate stages in three different projects that I'm currently working on. For this paper I have written down my talk and illustrated it with more or less the same photos. I have added, as an annex, a summary of and a reflection on this presentation.

Keywords: practice, method, halt, recording, reflection
Projects:

Case 1: Tracing Form

Mirrors, glass and marble sheets from secondhand furniture, which are arranged and rearranged, traced with a pencil and/or lacquered. The question as to how the combining and handling of these furniture fragments can lead to organic structures and compositions resulting in a combined effect of recognition and abstraction is investigated.

The drawings in ‘Tracing Form’ are made by tracing the furniture fragments on big sheets of drawing paper. These overlapping tracings of forms result in autonomous linear drawings.

The making of the drawings is a process consisting of a sequence of acts. (see photographs below and on next page) Every single sheet, often big, heavy and fragile, is carefully placed on the drawing paper and then traced by pencil. The overlapping of the tracings results in new relations of form, but I can’t always anticipate how the impact of the new form will be on the previous tracings. The “random” aspect plays an important role here, and thus the drawings often “fail”. The drawings are made horizontally, and when they are hung on the wall, the perspective changes to a degree that they look different from what I had expected. Sometimes they are too complex or look unfinished. Sometimes they are better than I had expected. (see photographs on page 166)
Drawings top and below: Tracing Form, 2010. (100x150 cm)

Video: ‘Tracing From’ (14 min)

The video ‘Tracing Form’ shows the making of an 8 metre long drawing in my studio. (see photograph below) Because of the size of the objects, I had the idea to make an extra large drawing with a big scale, so that the entire image cannot be read in a single glance. In the video I’m filming and tracing the forms at the same time. The video shows how the accumulation of pencil lines slowly creates an autonomous image. In addition, the length of the drawing, as well as the reflections in the glass, the mirrors and the polished marble, create an image of the spatiality and the character of my studio. The video can be read as a journey through the studio. (see video stills on next spread)
Reflective Shapes

The works in 'Reflective Shapes' consist of a series of partly white lacquered mirrors, glass sheets and marble sheets from secondhand furniture. The white high-gloss paint covers the largest part of the object and results in an abstraction of the form. The unlacquered fragments allow a reading of the function and materiality of the object. In the process of deciding which part of the object should be painted and which fragment should be left unpainted and what the size of the unpainted fragment should be, I make a series of tests with white paper that can easily be placed on and removed from the object. (see next page) I also place different tests next to each other in order to see whether any interesting intermediate stages might occur, and how these may possibly make a difference in the decision concerning the size of the painted and unpainted fragments.
Case 2: Modular Shape

The ‘Modular Shape’ works are made with matchsticks that I painted myself. These works are built up of various octagonal, polygonal and hexagonal modules that are joined together by means of a glue pistol. The advantage of this kind of glue is that it stays flexible after hardening, which in this case makes it possible to move the joints in different directions after the parts are assembled. When the modules are glued together, the traction deforms them into an organic entity. The resulting organic form/structure has an extremely three dimensional character, which also makes it very delicate or fragile and, as already mentioned, the joints stay flexible.

A few months ago I started to work differently with the Modular Shapes. I started trying out what would happen if I were to change the materiality and the scale, and how I could reintegrate these changes into new work. I made a series of tests with copper thread and welding to try to create modular shapes on the same scale but much stronger. The strength and stability caused a degradation of elegance, sensitivity and lightness. (see photograph below)
After this, I started experimenting to see what kinds of materials and construction requirements would be needed if the works were to be approximately 4 to 5 metres high, how thick the poles needed to be to achieve the same linear structure, and how to create flexible joints that are strong enough. When it came to the stability of the form, everything went wrong. But, accidentally, an interesting thing occurred. As the joints were not strong enough, the shape collapsed and looked like a deflated balloon; it looked like a structure that needed to be hung up. (see photograph below) Nevertheless, the enlargement of the scale clearly demands a more complex joining system.

I also did some tests where I used older work. (see photographs below, left top) I build a model in the form of a grid structure representing the inside dimensions of my studio, which I cut up and transformed into an organic modular shape. Here again, the joints were problematic. (see other photographs below)
Case 3: Pavilions

I have been invited to participate in a temporary exhibition called 'Cabanes'. It will take place in the classical park of the Castle of Seneffe in Ottignies during the summer of 2011. For the exhibition I plan to design and build pavilions in the spirit of the work 'Children Pavilion' that I made in 2000. (see photograph below)

‘Children Pavilion’, 2000 (450x300xH125cm), plywood, acrylics

When I started designing the pavilions, I knew that it would be painted wooden pavilions, approximately 120 cm high and 150cm by 150cm, without a roof and looking like modular units. With six different models, I started testing out how the different units should relate to each other. (see photographs next page)
The units will be placed in a circular shape, in a way that suggests a central court for groups of children, separated from the rest of the garden. This circular arrangement will allow the children to move easily from one unit to another. The doors and windows make it fun for them to run in and out and to look in different directions. A micro-universe of freedom against the dominant rationality of the garden.

After that, I started looking for a suitable place in the park. The park of the Castle of Seneffe is an example of classical French garden architecture. The castle stands centrally in the park, with in front of it a large lawn, and on the right and the left flanked by straight lanes leading to a round pond. There is an orangerie, a bird volery, fountains and a theatre, all connected to each other within a perfect grid of lanes and paths. After many explorative strolls through the park, I decided not to compete with the overwhelming garden architecture, but instead to try to look for a place "in the shadow" for my pavilions – a place that doesn’t connect directly with the viewpoints offering a classical French garden perspective, but where you walk by and sort of randomly encounter the pavilions during your walk through the gardens. Another idea is to spread the different units randomly in the most far away and 'rougher' parts of the garden, in accordance with the placement of pavilions in the classical English garden of the eighteenth century. You see the pavilion from far, but when you walk towards it, it disappears, and then suddenly reappears in front of you. You walk through the garden from pavilion to pavilion and discover the garden while walking. In this way, the pavilions will kind of integrate the children into nature.
Some reflections on and a summary of my presentation at the GRC/Toonmoment of November 2010 at Sint-Lucas Architecture, Ghent

For the GRC/Toonmoment in November 2010, I tried to show my artistic working method in a ‘light’ and clearly focused presentation. I wanted to be as specific as possible about what I wanted to show. As I mentioned in my abstract, I have made halts during the design process of three projects that I’m working on at the moment. I have registered a number of intermediate stages to give an idea of the way I work and of how I decide what to do and what not to do. These halts can be regarded as the freezing of a reflective moment, a registration of what I already have achieved at the moment when I step back, reflect and consider the next step. The exposure of the intermediate stages in the process of making a work can give an insight into or an explanatory view of an artistic working method. By exclusively focusing on my method, I have the feeling that I can work from an integrated thinking structure. The focus is on that which is one’s own, which does not imply a narcissistic view, but rather a view based on one’s own personal horizon of criteria for taking decisions. By doing so, I managed to give some insight into an instrumentarium that I have made. It was as if I was able to stand still and reflect on my own language and my own rules, and to try to communicate about the mechanisms of my working system. I talked about matters close to myself, matters that I through the years have made my own. Thus I felt relatively good about the talk.

Without this kind of organised public moment in front of a board, I would probably never have stood still and reflected on my own method with the intention to communicate about it. When I’m working I shift quite quickly between good, less good and bad aspects of the work. As a result of this lecture, I have kind of obliged myself to investigate the shifting criteria and to name them. But this turned out to be more complex than I had thought. The panel pointed out that I hadn’t really shown or named these criteria. Which means more work ahead...

More of these presentations could probably result in another working rhythm within which there would occur time and space to raise specific questions – questions that would clarify the choices and maybe establish new connections. In the future I intend to focus on this issue. The lecture also compelled me to formulate a specific framework through which I can communicate about research related activities. This framework was built up from my practice, and I felt satisfied when in the preparations for my talk I was able to construct a framework based on an issue, a case and a method. The issue ‘aspects of a working method’ served to detect and reveal my artistic method; the case(s) are the three projects that I’m working on at the moment; and the method ‘unfinished work’ is the standing still or halting and reflecting on work which is not yet finished. I had the feeling that the panel also understood this framework.

One of the panel members commented that my research project actually consists of setting up and carrying out experiments, i.e. that I want to get to know things through testing them out. I thought that this was an interesting way of interpreting my way of working. Testing and experimenting feels like my own personal way of dealing with creativity. But the thing is that I always decide beforehand exactly what I want to test. In other words, the tests are neither random nor free, because most of the time I know more or less what image I want to make. They are necessary intermediate stages in which aspects concerning materiality, form, space, scale and much more are investigated closely. In that perspective it could be interesting to consider the tests as artistic (research) work in one or another way. The focus on my own method has led to my being able to throw away other things. I have felt more free, but at the same time also more self-assured. For the first time I had the feeling that I had reached a point of being able to establish a specific research framework within which I could perform artistic research. For the future, I imagine that I can extend this kind of framework, and maybe over time start working from a slightly different perspective.

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Below: fragment of a sketch made during the RTS Knowledge Session, January 2009
Reflections 15 is published by Sint-Lucas School of Architecture
Editing: Gudrun De Maeyer
Revision, final editing selected English texts: Richard Sundahl
Image editing: Ben Robberechts
Print: Drukkerij Sintjoris Ghent - March 2011
Production: ARC, Architectuur Reflectie Centrum
ISSN: 1784-7052