

CULTURAL  
SPACES  
AND  
DESIGN

REGINE HALTER,  
CATHERINE WALTHARD  
(EDS.)

PROSPECTS  
OF  
DESIGN EDUCATION



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## PREFACE

The present crises of civilisation are expressions of a crisis of thinking and of acting. The ecological, economic, and social problems show that, obviously, customary patterns of thought and action are not capable of designing thrivable problem-solving processes.

Neither is there a lack of qualified root cause analyses nor of global networks communicating their findings. What is missing, however, are concepts, methods, and practices putting conceptual acting in the context of global trouble.

At this point, the publication Cultural Spaces and Design. Prospects of Design Education unfolds possibilities and ways that may counter a blind spot in design education. This blind spot is the concern with the topic of globalisation and design.

Already in the thematic constellation – globalisation and design –, two diametrically opposed dynamisms seem to confront each other. The concept of globalisation, on the one hand, bears something almost fateful, as if it were something that is coming over us and develops way beyond our influence – an erratic block, like an alien excessively growing by itself. This is not much of a surprise since digitalised societies produce complex arrays of dynamically interacting effects that, in their turn, generate processes of structural changes. This gives rise to a feeling of powerlessness.

Design, on the other hand, as an in principle intentionally directed action, embodies the exact opposite – provided that it is not reduced to the design of physical objects but rather implies the design of structures, forms of communication, social relations etc. It always strives to cut aisles into what seems inevitable, makes suggestions, intervenes, alters, and thus pursues a conception of itself as conceptual acting. Of course, design is not able – or not able by itself – to solve the current crises but it is always a special place for debating issues regarding civilisation. And today, these issues cannot be comprehended without considering the specific dynamism of globalisation.

If globalisation and design shall be put into a critical and thus productive connection, then this connection cannot be frozen into a hierarchical power structure in favour of globalisation.

Therefore, the question arises how a chaotic whole (world, society, so-called nature) and its equally chaotically behaving subsystems can at all be influenced by

design. The old concepts of causality no longer suffice, and design moves away from the product and redirects its attention to social, cultural, economic, and ecological processes. Within the framework of an unstable whole it works on intervening into processes: it works processively. Thus, processiveness and self-organisation are essential factors for an understanding of design as intervention.

If design education attends to options of how to alter global developments – and today, this should be one of its main tasks – it would have to reposition itself in this paradigm shift and apply it to its own questions, methods, and structures.

One of the most powerful implications of globalisation is the levelling of cultural peculiarity and idiosyncrasy. This observation led to a kind of discontent with the (present) culture of globalisation and was the decisive factor for the research project preceding this book under the same title: *Cultural Spaces and Design. Prospects of Design Education*.<sup>1</sup>

This project was the last stage of a concern since 2009 with the alteration of design education against the background of globalisation. Initially, focused on change of environment and thus change of perspective under the title *Travel Trains Talent*, the annual topic at the Institute HyperWerk was, under the title *Upstream. Prospects through Design*, dedicated to the perception of the foreign.

The project *Cultural Spaces and Design. Prospects of Design Education* was situated in the field of applied intercultural design research. The project team – Regine Halter, Catherine Walthard, Anka Falk – focused on the impact of the processes of globalisation on design and examined their consequences for design education. Carried out in international collaboration with lecturers and students from other universities as well as representatives from design practice, the project aimed to develop, test, and evaluate model educational content. For this purpose, tools and methods for dealing with different design cultures have been conceived and *pars pro toto* integrated into design education. This implies a lot more than the acquisition of useful organisational skills to be applied to an international project: what is at stake here are the criteria for a type of design practice that promotes cultural diversity instead of serving the *doctrine d'unité* of Global Design.

We – the project team – asked primarily how design students can be prepared in their education for this challenge. How can they learn to pay attention to what is special and deviant, to the differences from one's own and particular design canon, how can the perception of the losses, the displacements, the elimination of cultural differences in the context of globalisation be sharpened? How can one's own design-erly measures and conception of oneself be situated?

In design education, as in other fields, new approaches, products, and prospects emerge, above all, from cultural exchange and mobility. Until now, however, intercultural student experience has not been made the subject of education and teaching, an omission which conflicts not least with the more and more common practice to internationalise design teams that is coming with globalisation.

With this project, the project team granted special value to the working experiences of students in new, foreign life-worlds. Therefore, students' experience should be documented, evaluated, and analysed with regard to new contents for design education, and made available to design education for further discussion. With the *Travel Kit*, an important prerequisite for the production of these documentations was developed. Anka Falk explains this in depth in this publication.

As is reflected in the title *Cultural Spaces*, the educational perspective we envision focuses on the interactive concern within a particular milieu, a concrete life-world, as well as on the needs of those who are involved in these activities. The local level is appreciated as the actual *hot spot* of globalisation.

In place of the current homogenisation of cultural particularity and practices and without signing up to an ideology of a global happy family, the *Cultural Spaces and Design. Prospects of Design Education* project focuses on a concept of design education which understands the interactive communication and collaboration of all participants – designers and users – as well as the different modes of perception of various milieus, life-worlds and places as a significant challenge for the work of design in our time.

It follows that the students' change of environment and their confrontation with life-worlds unknown to them plays a significant role in the educational concept we are favouring. This book contains reports on some of these changes of environment.

The leitmotifs of the research project *Cultural Spaces and Design. Prospects of Design Education* outlined here are certainly also valid for this publication. Nonetheless, the book is not an illustration of the project. Rather, it provides examples and demonstration material for further discussion. These may also inspire students' and teachers' academic work.

The order of the individual chapters, i.e. of the themes, as well as the sequences of the contributions therein yield different perspectives. Thus, we want to correspond to a structure which Édouard Glissant refers to through his coinage *archipelagisation of thinking*: »[...] the capability of seeing the island and at the same time being conscious of its connection to something much larger, of its relation to a group of islands, as a link to an archipelago.«<sup>2</sup>

Our project work was itself moulded by this approach. Randomness has never been a goal; rather, at the respective levels of action, we need to be able to refer always anew to the various life-worlds and their cultural implications. Our interest has focused neither on verifying or falsifying theoretical assumptions nor on straightforwardly updating a more or less established meta-discourse. Instead, we have always been concerned with the question which effects the experiences have on the students and their self-conception as designers and how these effects become manifest in their further work.

Several contributions in the first chapter address this question explicitly, e.g. the article by Bettina Köhler. Other authors trace their close autobiographical

connections with their current profession, such as Carlos Montana-Hoyos and Lisa Scharoun. Leyla Belkaïd Neri and Jilly Traganou discuss, on the basis of their concrete project experiences, possible consequences for the conception of design or for intercultural pedagogy. Richie Moalosi et al. illustrate the connection between (locally existing) cultural memory and design production. In their second contribution, he and his co-authors are concerned with a very specific problem – namely with the question how, in cooperation with the farmers affected, technical methods can be developed to keep elephants away from their fields. Not only does this article point towards a design issue with which European or western designers would hardly be able to cope *ad hoc*; it also gives an idea of possible alternatives to shooting wolves and bears that have become domestic again in Europe.

In the chapter *Realisations*, project cooperations are described which take place over great distances and over a longer period of time with universities in Canada (Concordia University, Montreal) and New Zealand (AUT University, Auckland). Various design disciplines have been concerned with the topic »water«. Thus, various specific problem-solving approaches through design become manifest which are feasible for a topic of global significance. Moreover, the realisation of these workshops yields examples of an international educational format which broadens active exchange beyond the individual academic environment, beyond individual ways of seeing things, and beyond individual design approaches. The contributions by Natalie Robertson, Tatiana Tavares and Éric Simon as well as the selection of projects by students participating in the format show the diversity of the cultural and also of the disciplinary backgrounds and approaches to the given issue.

These contributions can be read in the context of the report on the project week *Water* in Botswana since they are parts of a spectrum of various perspectives and approaches whose differences as well as points of contact may become subjects of further discussions.

In the entire publication there are reports by students. These are excerpts dealing with the perceptions, questions, and also critical comments raised by the students' experiences. The media used are diverse, i.e. not limited to verbal language.<sup>3</sup> Anka Falk, in her already mentioned contribution on the *Travel Kit*, goes into the issue of choosing appropriate media.

Finally, in the last chapter, some aspects of our research project *Cultural Spaces and Design. Prospects of Design Education* are summarised. Here, too, we are not concerned with recapitulating the project but with sharpening the essential approaches and findings.

While we were dealing with the question how the perception of and reflection on cultural difference can become a part of design education we kept asking ourselves how the teachers themselves make their own contributions to this process and how their own thinking strategies affected working with the students – undoubtedly, there is an influence. We were also concerned with these questions when we designed this publication.

The book design functions like a host. On the surface of the paper with the

texts not yet filled in, three colours, in various line compositions, guide the reader through the articles and pictures. The fonts – one based on the horizontal and the other on the vertical – join invisible geographical axes. Through the layout process, questions about the perceiving and placing of pictures came up, about their original context and what it means to use them in another cultural context. According to which cultural criteria is a picture used? The making of this publication raised questions about perception, reception, and transmission of pictures, and how carefully observing and understanding the implications of a picture is indispensable. Thus, in the process of selecting, framing, and assembling pictures and texts, conscious reflection on our own position constituted a big part of our work on this book.

Regine Halter, Catherine Walthard

## NOTES

- 1 The research project *Cultural Spaces and Design. Prospects of Design Education* was supported by the Gebert Rűf Foundation and was implemented by Regine Halter, Catherine Walthard, and Anka Falk from 2014 to 2017 at the Academy for Art and Design FHNW. The project was maintained by the institutes HyperWerk and Masterstudio Design (both HGK FHNW). Project monitor was Jilly Traganou.
- 2 Marsha Pierce explains this in her text <http://denkstil.bankstil.de/archipelisches-denken-edouard-glissant> Accessed on: July 20, 2019.
- 3 Note that these excerpts are taken from documentations or Bachelor's theses related to a *design* education.

# HOW CAN WE LIVE TOGETHER

## MATTHIAS BÖTTGER

This is the question which stands behind many projects and discourses at the Institute HyperWerk of the Academy of Art and Design in Basel. Whether in debates about justice, regarding issues in sustainability, participation, food, digitisation, migration, or care work – this »living together« seems not to be so easy. And exactly for this reason it is the primary challenge for the present and the future.

To whom, however, does this WE refer? Really to all of us? All humans? What about those who are oppressed and marginalized? How is this WE distributed geographically? Which cultural spaces are included? What about the animals, the plants, and the other living creatures? Should artificial creatures and non-living things be considered as well? Should we be concerned with the global or the local, the material or the immaterial, the analog or the digital?

*Against the background of their non-sustainable metabolism, our societies will change in any case; the question is just whether by design or by disaster.*  
(Sommer, Bernd; Welzer, Harald 2017: 27)

Who designs these changes? The students and the teachers at the HyperWerk are concerned with processual design and transformation. Here, design is practical, 1:1, always true to scale, transdisciplinary and theoretically grounded, and not necessarily related to a product, a material or a profession. In their research project »Cultural Spaces of Design« Regine Halter and Catherine Walthard expand the field and put the reception of other traditions of thought and design at the center of design education. »It matters what ideas we use to think other ideas.« (Strathern, Marilyn 1992: 10. Quoted after Haraway, Donna 2016: 34) Thus, extended and newly to be evaluated frameworks for the design of transformation processes emerge – hopefully, they will continue to bear rich fruit at the HyperWerk.

Under our 2019 topic »Verbinde die Punkte – Doing Care/Connect the Dots – Doing Care« developed by the 18th class of HyperWerk students together with Max Spielmann, as well as under »WIR HALTEN HAUS/WE KEEP HOUSE« with Catherine Walthard and Laura Pregger in 2018, and under the 2020 working title »Glück und

*Konflikt/Happiness and Conflict«* students search for and explore niches, opportunities, options, and degrees of freedom for living together on this earth.

»Doing Care« includes that we need to look after the HyperWerk. Without saving ourselves no saving the world. In 2019 the HyperWerk celebrates its 20th anniversary, and the fields of transformation mentioned above will be relevant for a sustainable living together, for listening and learning over the next 20 years. In this respect, design can be understood as care work.

*Assuming general agreement that architecture [design] is indispensable to the continuation of human life, and assuming further that humans are part of the environment they inhale, ingest and inhabit, architecture [design], written purposefully and decisively with a small a [d], is a most crucial practice of care for earthly survival. (Krasny, Elke 2019: 41)*

Generally speaking, three headwords seem to me especially relevant for our work at the HyperWerk: planetary boundaries, justice, and digitisation. All three are potentially disruptive and global.

*You can choose your metaphor. You can't choose your planet, which is the only one any of us will ever call home. (Wallace-Wells, David 2019: 228)*

Living together on earth is dependent on planetary boundaries and flows of matter, and it is endangered by the anthropogenic influence on climate, biodiversity, acidification, nitrogen and water balance, etc. Calling this a crisis is a euphemism since crisis implies that it can be overcome. Within human dimensions of time, however, humankind will have to cope permanently with these challenges.

*The Anthropocene could give way to another geological epoch only after we have vanished from the surface of the earth. Our present is the Anthropocene; it is our time. (Danowski, Deborah; Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo 2019: 11)*

Not only is the division between nature and culture a dubious construction, but it also collapses into its opposite. It is no longer culture, i.e. humankind who dominates nature; rather, »nature« strikes back – their separation is due to a concept which needs to be revised. And not all traditions of thought have pushed this separation quite as far as the Western tradition.

Justice is the second great challenge. Our living together is still characterized and threatened by discrimination and oppression, by sexism, classism, racism and non-participation. Usually, those who are privileged are the ones who set the rules and enforce them. In order to develop future or present living together from Basel, from one of the most privileged spots on earth, we have to take this opportunity and do a critical analysis of our own patterns of thought, systems of ideas and of knowledge. Thus, we need to leave our comfort zone and realize that the essential achievements of civilisation which are to be preserved – such as rule of law, democracy, equality and liberty – are not fulfilled for everyone. At the HyperWerk, the individual



exchange with other cultures and design schools has been promoted also beyond the established academic exchange programs. At the same time, we do not ignore the negative effects of tourism and polluting emissions from air traffic. In the course of the research project »Cultural Spaces and Design« a lively online video exchange has developed with students and teachers in Auckland, New Zealand – across thousands of kilometers and different time zones. Further discussions and intensive listening are indispensable for everybody to be heard.

*[...] and the task [...] is not to amplify the autistic ›speaking for oneself‹ of the individual subjects but rather to hear their common silence.*

(Steyerl, Hito 2008: 16)

Progressive digitisation, the opportunity to design with digital tools, and the ensuing new ways of living, learning and working were the crucial factors for the founding of HyperWerk in 1999. Digitisation has been gaining ever more momentum up until today. The euphoria of the beginning, however, and the hopes for more freedom through digital networking and empowerment have been strongly marred by the hyper-capitalist shaping of the current platform economies and surveillance strategies. Living together requires us to regain the opportunities of the digitisation and associate the disruptive potential of this apparent dematerialisation with the other transformative movements.

These three thematic fields must not be approached separately but need to be conceptualised beyond the traditional dichotomies of nature and culture, technology and society, digital and analog. Recently, students have collectively read Donna Haraway's book »Staying with the Trouble« which connects so appropriately with our annual topic 2019 »Connect the Dots – Doing Care«.

*The task is to make kin in lines of inventive connection as a practice of learning to live and die well with each other in a thick present. Our task is to make trouble, to stir up potent response to devastating events, as well as to settle troubled waters and rebuild quiet places [...] learning to stay with the trouble of living and dying in response-ability on a damaged earth.* (Haraway, Donna 2016: 1f.)

The rejectionist »I would prefer not to« is a significant part of »Connect the Dots« and is reflected also in Karin Harrasser's happily matching translation of the English title »Staying with the Trouble« into the German »Unruhig bleiben« (»Staying unsettled«).

Although it is tempting to connect the dots conclusively and bestow ONE meaning on the whole I want to say NO! A »holistic« world view or narrative can easily become closed and dogmatic, be it as belief system, end-of-the-world scenario, or denial of reality. – Stay unsettled!

Basel, July 2019

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# EXPERIENCING THE FOREIGN

»So let's start and give back to the two elements of the concept ›dialogue‹ their full meanings by taking them literally. That is to say, let us give to the *dia* of the *distance* its meaning: this dialogue will become the richer the more counterparts it establishes on equal terms between the cultures, and the more points of intersection it enables between them – and this in a movement countering the omnipresent homogenisation, which is a consequence of globalisation. However, let us just as much help the *logos* of the *comprehensible* to get its right: there is nothing cultural that would be impossible to be expressed. Let that be said against any cultural isolation and the never completely vanishing temptation of having the cultural congeal into an obscure ›identity‹.«

François Jullien

# CULTURAL MEMORY: AN ASSET FOR DESIGN-DRIVEN INNOVATION WITHIN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES LESSONS FOR DESIGN EDUCATION

RICHIE MOALOSI, KEIPHE NANI SETLHATHANYO, QANTHATA JESTER SEALETSA

The importance of culture and of the creative economy as drivers of sustainable development is increasingly getting worldwide recognition in terms of income-generation, job creation and export earnings. Due to this symbiotic relationship between culture and the creative industries, this study investigates how design-driven innovation can play a leading role to achieve the sustainable development goals of the local economies. Cultural insight has become an integral component of innovative products and services. However, little research has been conducted on how to integrate cultural characteristics into design activities to create emotional interaction between products and users. Investing in culture and the creative sector as drivers of social development can also lead to results that contribute to the overall well-being of communities, individual self-esteem and quality of life, dialogue and cohesion. (Creative Economy Report, 2013) Culture has a critical influence on the acceptance and use of products and services. Design approaches in a particular context are embedded in a cultural context of beliefs, expectations, and values.

Evidence from the literature (Moalosi et al., 2010; Shen et al., 2006) shows that culture empowers people with the capabilities to take ownership of their own development processes. This is in line with the capabilities theory which claims that increasing the capacity of people to live the type of life that they value should be the primary concern of any public policy. When initiating development programmes, a human-centred and context-based approach should be considered that includes diverse local values, conditions, resources, skills and limitations. For this to happen, designers, especially from new emerging economies, must shift their thinking to focus on the basic human needs as the centrepiece of progressive design. This can be transformative and lead to sustainable change. The literature also shows that development programmes have failed in the past because they did not embrace people's cultural settings. (Creative Economy Report, 2013)

As the world becomes more globalised and to some extent glocalised, users seek distinctive products and services imbued with local meaning yet with a global appeal. The creative industries have become a transformative force in the world because of their economic value as well as their role in producing new creative products and technologies. These industries are one of the growing sectors of the world economy, and hence this chapter seeks to explore how design-driven innovation can contribute to such sustainable development initiatives. People's creativity and innovation are key drivers of the creative industries in new emerging economies. The creative industries can be defined as the cycles of creation, production and distribution of products and services that utilise creativity and intellectual capital as key inputs. (Creative Economy Report, 2008) They focus on knowledge-based activities that produce tangible products and intangible intellectual services with creative content, economic value and market objectives.

The creative industries are emerging as a strategic choice for reinvigorating economic growth, employment and social cohesion. The special edition of the Creative Economy Report (2013) argues that culture and creativity are processes which are intimately bound up in the imaging and the generation of new ideas, technologies, products and ways of interpreting the world. Investment in the creative industry can assist to build new developmental pathways in terms of identity, innovation and creativity for individuals and local communities. The significance of the roles of design and cultural memory within the creative industries is under-researched, especially from the new emerging economy perspective. Therefore, designers need a framework which will guide them on how to create sustainable and innovative cultural-sensitive products reflecting the user's identity. This is in recognition that culture is now considered as a new dimension of product competitiveness. (Creative Economy Report, 2013) It is against this background that the study seeks to develop ways of using cultural memory to innovate or add value to products and services produced by the creative industries.

## CULTURE

Culture is dynamic, dialectic, and incorporates new forms and meanings while changing or reshaping traditional ones. Thus, it is conceived as a coherent body of beliefs and practices which are dynamic and changing within particular historical periods. Culture is multi-layered. For example, Stephan (2004) suggests two layers (visible and invisible), Schein (1999) proposes three levels (basic assumptions, values and artefacts); Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1997) and Spencer-Oatey (2000) argue for four layers (basic assumptions and values; beliefs, attitudes and conventions; systems and institutions; artefacts, products, rituals and behaviour).

Based on Spencer-Oatey's model, this study defines culture as a shared set of basic assumptions and values, with resultant behavioural norms, attitudes and beliefs manifesting themselves in systems and institutions as well as in material and non-material elements. Spencer-Oatey (2000) argues that >basic assumptions< are

factors which are deeply held by the society, constituting the invisible core ideas that inform the other layers, whilst ›values‹ involve observable culture that the society claims to hold; for example, ethics and aesthetics. Group members are unlikely to share identical sets of ›beliefs, attitudes and conventions‹ which make up the second inner layer consisting of expectations how people behave in various situations. The third layer consists of ›systems and institutions‹. These are structures of a society within which values and norms are transmitted. The fourth layer is encircled with a split outer layer of culture composed of ›artefacts and products‹ (material items) on one side, and ›rituals and behaviour‹ (non-material elements) on the other. Artefacts include the visible and easily described elements of culture which have an immediate emotional impact (Schein, 1999). However, designers tend to overlook incorporating the inner core layers of culture and thus design products that are based mainly on the outer layer.

## CULTURAL MEMORY

Aleida Assmann (2008) developed a framework of communicative and cultural memory in which memory is regarded as the ability that is the precondition for people to form an awareness of their identity at a personal and collective level. The synthesis of time, identity and memory results in the three levels of personal, social and cultural dimensions, as illustrated in Table 1.

Level	Time	Identity	Memory
Inner (neuro-mental)	Inner, subject time	Inner self	Individual memory
Social	Social time	Social self, a person as carrier of social roles	Communicative memory
Cultural	Historical, mythical, cultural time	Cultural identity	Cultural memory

**Table 1. Memory: individual, social and cultural.**  
Source: Assmann (2008)

In Table 1, the inner level is viewed as the personal memory which is based on the neuro-mental system. The social level involves the memory which deals with communication, social interaction, and socialisation. Assmann (2008) further argues that memory enables people to live in groups and communities and as such enables people to build a collective or social memory. The cultural level deals with images, symbolic forms, icons, artefacts, and cultural objects as carriers of cultural memory which gives people cultural identity.

Cultural memory is viewed as related to the present people's perception of the past which is influenced by the present – hence the dynamism of culture. Rodriguez and Fortier (2007) describe cultural memory as those transformative historical experiences that define a culture, even as time passes and the culture adapts to new influences. Cultural memory is the way a society ensures cultural continuity by

preserving, with the assistance of cultural mnemonics, its collective knowledge from one generation to the next, rendering it possible for later generations to reconstruct their cultural identity. (Assmann, 1999; 2006) References to the past reassure the members of a society of their collective identity and supply them with an awareness of their unity and singularity in time and space, which constitutes a historical consciousness – by creating a shared past. (Assmann, 2012) Cultural memory is local, egocentric, and specific to a group and its values. It is a form of collective memory – it is shared by a number of people and it conveys to them a collective cultural identity. (Assmann, 2008) Cultural memory is about making meaningful statements about the past in a given cultural context of the present.

Cultural memory can be defined as the memory that is shared outside the avenues of formal historical discourse, yet is entangled with cultural products and imbued with cultural meaning. (Meuburger, 2011) This study investigates how designers can create or make sense of the past in the current cultural set-up. What narratives can designers tell from their and the society's cultural memory which can inspire the design of innovative products and services? Cultural memory acts as an individual's or society's databank or virtual library of ideas where designers can turn to for inspiration. It is based on material contact between a remembering mind and a reminding object. Objects do not have a memory of their own, but they may remind people, trigger their memory, because they carry memories which have been invested in them. (Assmann, 2006; 2008) Cultural memory exists in disembodied form and requires institutions of preservation and re-embodiment. The study proposes ways in which design-driven innovation can be used to strengthen creative industries to achieve the expected results of inclusive socio-economic and sustainable development. Design-driven innovation taps the communities' strengths and creative talents using the society's cultural memory.

Cultural memory is a dynamic social process. It does not preserve or reproduce cultural knowledge without sometimes altering, shaping, or even inventing it, either consciously or unconsciously. (Goucher et al., 2004) It is history, but it is about understanding the past in a present cultural setting. That is, the past experiences inform the present and future design initiatives. Memory systems exert great influence on communities over their cultural experiences. The oldest system of cultural memory is the spoken word transmitted through oral traditions. In this age of technology, oral tradition remains an important means of preserving and transmitting cultural memory. Oral tradition is a formal and highly ritualised system of cultural transmission, but it can also reflect changes. (Goucher et al., 2004)

Memory is not just remembering the past, but it is strongly connected with physical artefacts, places and social interaction. A rich vocabulary of images and words exists to describe ideas about historical memory and connectedness. The same is true for remembering and forgetting as interdependent sides of memory. Africans used mnemonic devices, images, visual devices or objects that aid in and order remembering and reconfigure the past. These include royal emblems, shrines



and grave markers, staffs, thrones, religious rituals, myths, bead necklaces and many more. In some of these objects, painted or incised geometric markings were added to evoke particular events, places, or names from the past. An example is the Yoruba tribe in Nigeria: their cultural memory system was fundamentally oral, and they used a knotted cord, and colours – the lengths of the cord recorded important numbers such as census figures, chronological data, and everyday transactions. Writing has also served a variety of different purposes in shaping and transmitting cultural memory. Written and oral memory systems utilise both word and image to convey and remember the past. Buildings and monuments, sculpture and painting are tangible and visible means of maintaining cultural continuities across the centuries and also of engineering change. (Goucher et al., 2004) Written and non-written works in stone or paint (pottery and pictures), buildings and statues reflect the records of a given culture. Buildings such as the Egyptian pyramids or the monumental stone architecture of the ancient Great Zimbabwe preserve religious-cultural memories.

## DESIGN AND CULTURE

Design can be viewed as a mirror and an agent of change (Moalosi et al., 2010). It changes culture and at the same time it is shaped by it (Röse, 2004). Culture inspires designers to create new things, which in turn influence the same culture. (Smaili et al., 2007) Thus, design can play an active role towards culture, but at the same time it is subject to constant change of the cultural context. (Matsushia et al., 2009) Designers need to recognise that people are cultural beings, and the process of integrating cultural factors in their practice should be emphasised. Design is firmly embedded in the user's culture as it does not take place in a cultural vacuum. Users are not just physical and biological beings, but also socio-cultural beings. Baxter (2005) advances the argument that, due to inadequate research on the area, designers have not yet been able to consciously encode cultural phenomena to the same extent as physical and cognitive human factors. Innovation and creativity must be assimilated within the context of the users' own culture because creativity does not happen in a vacuum but in the interaction between users' thoughts and the socio-cultural context. (Moalosi et al., 2010)

Each culture evolves its own answers to its problems, and every nation has its unique and rich cultural background as a valuable resource of inspiration. (Wang et al., 2013) The use of a society's cultural factors in design has not only made technologies most appropriate for their social context but makes better use of culture itself as a resource for innovation. (Moalosi, 2010) It is acknowledged that consideration of cultural memory might pave the way to the diversification of design concepts, and this would facilitate product innovation. Consideration of cultural diversity can widen the variety of insights which can be used as a source of inspiration for designing sustainable practices. (Matsushia et al., 2009) Culture can be implicit and explicit. Designed products, just like culture, can reveal visible attributes (functional and aesthetic) and non-visible ones such as emotional attributes. Above all these

attributes and factors, the product should be symbolic to the society. Culturally orientated products can be used to mark the boundaries between groups, to create and demarcate differences or commonalities between figurations of people. In the field of design, the idea of a neo-liberal form of globalisation should be strongly contested. (Dong, 2008; ICSID, 2002) Globalisation is seen as a force that must be opposed because it results in the unification of people's culture through standardisation of products. Universality is a value that is reminiscent of the industrial era but is no longer meaningful in a post-industrial world. (Krippendorff, 2006) In reaction to globalisation, it is noted that an opposite trend is emerging within the creative industries, which promotes local identity and highlights cultural values and traditions. Therefore, globalisation has sparked off a new awareness of local identity. Designers are challenged to foster cultural diversity through the localisation of products (globalisation) in the face of globalisation. For example, a study conducted by Samsung Design revealed that users around the world are no longer willing to simply settle for one-size-fits-all types of products. (DeLarge, 2004)

## CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

The creative industries foster an economic set-up which considers different cultural identities, economic aspirations, social disparities and technological disadvantages. The creative economy brings issues relating to culture and technology into the mainstream of economic development thinking. The creative economy is taking place in an era of global transformation, creativity and knowledge are fast becoming powerful means of fostering development gains. The interface in creativity, culture, economics and technology has led to abilities to create and circulate intellectual capital, which generates income, jobs and export earnings while at the same time promoting social inclusion, cultural diversity, and human development. (Creative Economy Report, 2013) The creative industries generate cross-cutting linkages with the overall economy at the macro- and micro-levels. This scenario presents new opportunities for new emerging economies to leapfrog into high-growth areas of the world economy. (Creative Economy Report, 2013)

The creative industries are the drivers of the creative economy. They are based on the creation, production, and distribution of products and services that use intellectual capital as their prime contribution. The sector includes various creative activities, from arts and crafts, publishing, music, and visual and performing arts to technology-intensive and service-oriented industries such as television, film, radio broadcasting, new media, and various design disciplines. The creative industries are becoming the keystone of locally based strategies for sustainable development. This enhances the society's economic, cultural and social life.

Throsby (2001) argues that creative industries create cultural meaning and understanding and thus expressive value. The sector aims at integrating certain cultural tastes in the design to realise products that can sell in a given cultural con-

text. (Smaili et al., 2007) Throsby (2001:26) further states that expressive values can be divided in the following dimensions:

1. *Aesthetic value – the value that reflects beauty, harmony and form, as well as other aesthetic characteristics.*
2. *Spiritual value – either secular or religious – the quest for spiritual meaning shared by all human beings. The benefits derived from spiritual value include understanding, insight and awareness.*
3. *Social value – an important aspect of artistic work is its capacity to forge ties among otherwise separated individuals. It illuminates the character of the society we inhabit and creates a context in which relationships and identities can thrive.*
4. *Historical value – each one of us is a historical being, held in a pattern created by time. Part of the importance of artistic outputs is that they offer a unique snapshot of conditions at the time they were created and, in turn, provide clarity and a sense of continuity with the present.*
5. *Symbolic value – expressive objects are repositories of meaning. To the extent that individuals extract meaning from work, that work's symbolic value will lie in the meaning conveyed by the work and its value to the user.*
6. *Authenticity value – this underlines the fact that the work is the real, original and unique artwork which it is represented to be.*

In essence, encoding expressive value in design creates new insights, pleasures and experiences. It adds to the society's socio-cultural knowledge, stimulates users' emotions, and develops their lives. In their design practice, designers must co-create with the relevant stakeholders in the community. Tung (2012) refers to such a co-creation process as collective creativity. This process normally leads to knowledge creation and transfer, which are key sources of innovation that stimulates local development. (Bathelt et al., 2004) However, such a design approach has not been fully realised in terms of the new emerging economies' perspective on design products and services that resonate with users' cultural being, contribute to social inclusion, cultural diversity, and sustainable human development. McIntyre (2010) argues that a growing niche market for unique and authentic products has emerged from the homogeneous globalisation-driven market. Other scholars also argue that products reflecting local identity or cultural value offer a form of differentiation in an increasingly converging market. (Lin, 2007; Moalosi et al., 2010) Furthermore, Tung (2012) states that imbuing products with authentic characteristics by adapting features from the local culture can be a strategy to develop products which reflect differentiation and self-expression. This study investigates and proposes new ways in which designers can encode expressive values from their cultural memories in the design of products and services.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The study uses a case study to demonstrate how the concept of designing from cultural memory can assist designers in the creative industries in making a significant contribution to the creative economy as well as in raising the community's livelihood. The case study approach was adopted in this study because it is an empirical enquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context. (Creswell, 2009) This method allows researchers to explore individuals or organisations through interventions, relationships, communities or programmes, and supports the deconstruction and subsequent reconstruction of various phenomena. A case study also excels at bringing researchers to an understanding of a complex issue and can extend the experience to what is already known through previous research. It emphasises detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events and their relationships.

Two designers working in the creative industries were challenged to design products which are inspired by the local culture. The design challenge was then followed by semi-structured interviews to find out what inspired them to design such products. Furthermore, the study sought to identify the cultural memory factors which these two designers used in their design work as well as to document how they imbued and transformed cultural needs in the products they designed. Data analysis for this study was divided into two sections. The first section adopted a conceptual analysis technique in order to identify the appropriate cultural memory factors that designers identified and imbued in the designs. The second section of the data analysis involved a relational analysis approach. It involved investigating how the identified cultural memory factors were transformed into product design features reflecting the users' culture. This involved analysing the semi-structured interview data. All interview sessions were recorded and then transcribed. Themes, patterns, and relationships were developed from the transcripts. A coding framework was developed to code the data. As the analysis continued, new codes emerged from the data, and the coding framework was updated. This coding process assisted in building key concepts and theories to create summaries of the findings.

## FINDINGS

This section discusses the designers' inspiration behind their cultural-centred design. This was inspired by basket weaving – which is an integral part of Botswana's agricultural tradition and a practice which is mostly done by women in rural areas. This section reflects on the findings of a case study on how cultural memory products have become mediators of social communication. The findings also propose a validated culture-centred design model which can assist other designers in creating culture-orientated products and services.

## INSPIRATION TO DESIGN CULTURE-CENTRED DESIGNS

In responding to the question what inspires the designers to design products that encode cultural elements, they expressed that:



The country's history and its unique position in Africa are valuable assets that could be utilised in product development. (Designer A)

Culture-orientated products mirror Botswana's rich cultural diversity [...] all impressive indigenous work is slowly dying and is not being passed from one generation to the other. It has always been a motivation for me to infuse the culture and history of Botswana into the products that I design, in order to reflect and preserve our culture. (Designer B)

Based on the interview findings, the two designers first immersed themselves within the community and identified the following cultural memory factors associated with the art of basket weaving as parts of the local cultural activities:

togetherness, cooperation, sharing, traditional patterns, cultural heritage, *botho* – humane behaviour as well as building relationships (love) and trust. However, the designers also indicated that they draw inspiration from the following cultural elements: ancient pottery designs, traditional mud huts decoration, traditional figurative elements and symbols, and ancient rock paintings. The next section will discuss how the identified cultural memory factors were transformed and imbued into product features.

### USING TSWANA BASKET PATTERNS TO DESIGN A TABLE PLACEMAT, WALLPAPER, AND T-SHIRT

The designers' inspiration came from the diverse artistic environment with its traditional baskets which were identified as one of the leading traditional craft products in Botswana reflecting the users' culture. (Figure 1) The baskets were used as storage systems after harvesting. Behind these baskets, there were intricate patterns that represent metaphors of symbols, unique names, etc. Most people are familiar with basketry, but they are not aware that the patterns used in baskets have symbolic value and meaning. Therefore, the traditional basket patterns and their symbolism were identified as the cultural memory factors to be used in the new designs. Cultural elements are a key to creating a local sustainable experience. The designer found a niche in this by transferring traditional cultural elements into a contemporary product design. Designer A argues that *»this was one way of preserving the country's cultural heritage and reflecting the dynamic nature of Botswana's cultural trends, linked to their roots«*.

Figure 1 shows various basket patterns. The cultural meaning in these baskets includes: the *»tears of the giraffe«* signifying women following men on a hunt. The *»roof of rondavel«* illustrates how Batswana (people of Botswana) thatch their mud huts. Some other symbols are derived from observations of how an animal moves, such as a *»running ostrich«*, and the *»forehead of the zebra«*, the *»flight of the swallows«* which shows that when the swallow birds migrate, they fly in a triangular pattern before it rains. It is a sign of *pula* or rain, which signifies good fortune, etc.



Figure 1. Inspiration drawn from the symbolism in basket weaving.  
Source: Assmann (2008)

For this project, the patterns depicting a *»running ostrich«* were chosen to be used in the new product development. (Figure 2) The designers focused on transforming the pattern from abstract sketches to a range of computer-aided modelling. (Figure 3) The patterns were then transferred from their original context (baskets) to a new perspective of imbuing them in a table placemat. (Figure 4) The application of patterns to a new medium and function was achieved through the use of laser cutting technology.

Figure 5 illustrates the detailed design of the manufacturing process, and Figure 6 shows the final product (table placemat).





Figure 2. Basket patterns.

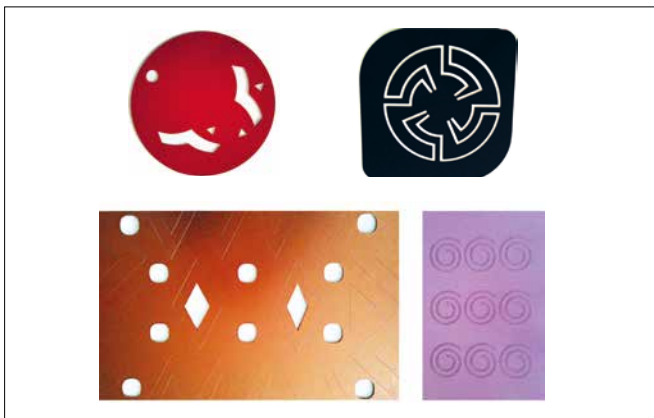


Figure 3. CAD models.

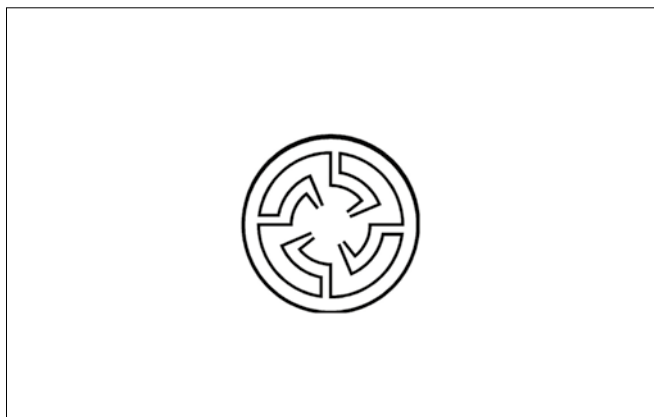


Figure 4. Selected pattern.

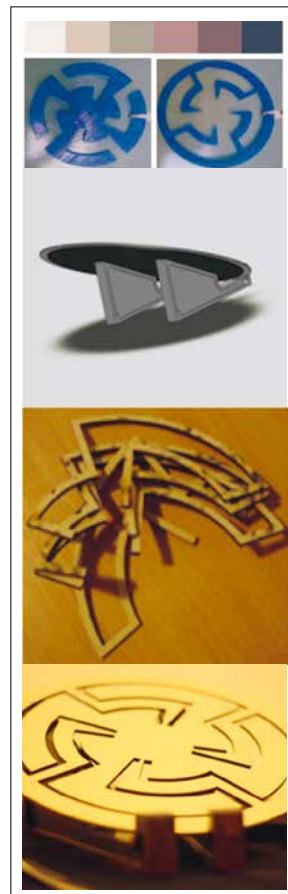


Figure 5. Detailed design.



Figure 6. Final table placemat. (K. N. Setlhatlhanyo 2014)

The designed placemat has symbolic significance because it shows narratives of the users' culture. The act of eating brings families together to share experiences and build everlasting relationships and trust. The design can be given as a gift to the newly-weds, to someone celebrating a birthday, or for a new home. Moreover, the same patterns were explored to produce other products which also portray the users' culture.

### CULTURAL MEMORY PRODUCTS AS MEDIATORS

Evidence from the case study shows that it is through the use of, and social relationship with, the products that cultural memory factors become visible. Chapman (2005) argues that it is through immersion that products become known and wholly understood. The product becomes a mediator and creates a social communication link between users and their culture. The message embodied in such products (Figure 6) shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action. Cultural products embody, reflect and mediate the views of the society from which they emerge. (Figure 7) Cultural artefacts of any given society at any given time reverberate with the themes of that society and that era. Products facilitate interaction, and users establish *quasi-social relationships* with them. Products that users own, express their social identity. It is a quasi-social relationship because the products stand in for the other social beings.

In Figure 7, the user receives messages from the designer through the product. The product carries cultural messages through being encoded with a shared set of cultural memory factors (symbols, form, signs, values, norms and beliefs) from traditional and contemporary sources. Therefore, these sources act as mediators of cultural memory narratives or as mediators of human thoughts and behaviour. This introduces the concept of *representation* in products. For example, symbols may convey commonly held cultural values, and if emotional fervour is attached to them, they can be used to gain greater power. On the basis of the users' feedback, the design can be modified to make it more responsive to users' needs. These needs may

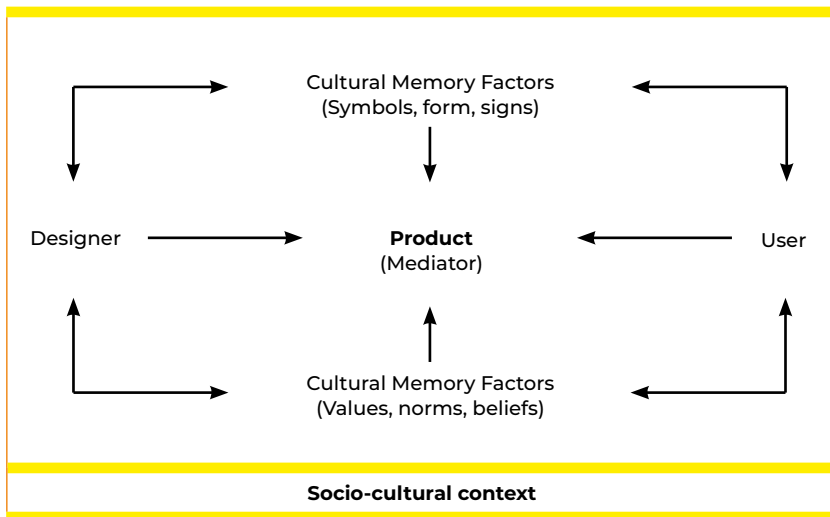


Figure 7. Mediation framework.

be utilitarian – intended for the purpose of performing physical tasks – or they may contain expressive values and thus be aimed at communicating personal, cultural, symbolic, spiritual, social, and aesthetic experiences. Cultural needs are often complex and blend both utilitarian and expressive values. All this is influenced by the local socio-cultural context in which the mediation is taking place through elements such as a culture-centred design model. The model in Figure 7 can be simplified by studying how the two designers specifically imbued cultural memory factors in product design. Figure 8 shows the process which was implemented by the designers in discovering, interpreting and encoding cultural memory features in product design.

What is emerging from the findings as illustrated in Figure 8 is that the designers immersed themselves in a context to discover and understand users' cultural memory factors. The identified cultural memory practices of interest were then drawn in abstract form. This symbolism was applied in designing a new product in a different context which has no association with the previous product features. Designers used the bi-associative technique to relate two areas which have never been associated before. The result of such an association is an innovative cultural product which has a recognisable product image embedded in intangible narratives which can facilitate users' acceptance. The product has a specific product image based upon symbolic expressive values. It projects a slightly different metaphor and meaning for everyone who uses it. All these activities take place within a given socio-cultural context.

This model depicts the approach of bringing together traditional and contemporary areas of knowledge in design. The focus is on how the output can be practically linked and integrated successfully in a product design environment to stimulate the creation of culture-centred innovative products. A culture-centred design model should provide tactile quality, symbolism, and a story that gives products value and meaning. (Moalosi et al., 2010)

## DISCUSSION

The findings show that designers can tap their empathy, cultural memory and those of their communities in order to design products imbued with local value and meaning yet with an international appeal (glocalisation). Such products are bound to be accepted by users because they reflect their lifestyles, their identities, and preserve their culture. Designs conceived from a cultural memory perspective may provide users with cultural meaning, which facilitates their acceptance. (Moalosi et al., 2010; Throsby, 2001) The products authenticate people's experiences.

Response to such products often produces a mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic meaning. A product cannot express its own meaning; the meaning must be constructed, given and produced through social discourse and cultural memory practices. In this instance, meaning can be produced through encoding designs with symbolic significance or value. Meaning provides an essential foundation upon which arousal and emotion is constructed. Products are no longer only seen as functional objects, but they are seen for what they symbolise: their meaning, association and involvement in building users' self-identity. They should not only have form and function, but also have »content« that is meaningful for the users. That is, the case study has demonstrated how designed products bring people together to cooperate, share experiences and ideas to sustain their cultural heritage.

Products are a means of social identification and differentiation. Such designs reflect the traditions and values of the society and express social meaning in terms of who the users are (their history – historical value), to whom they are connected

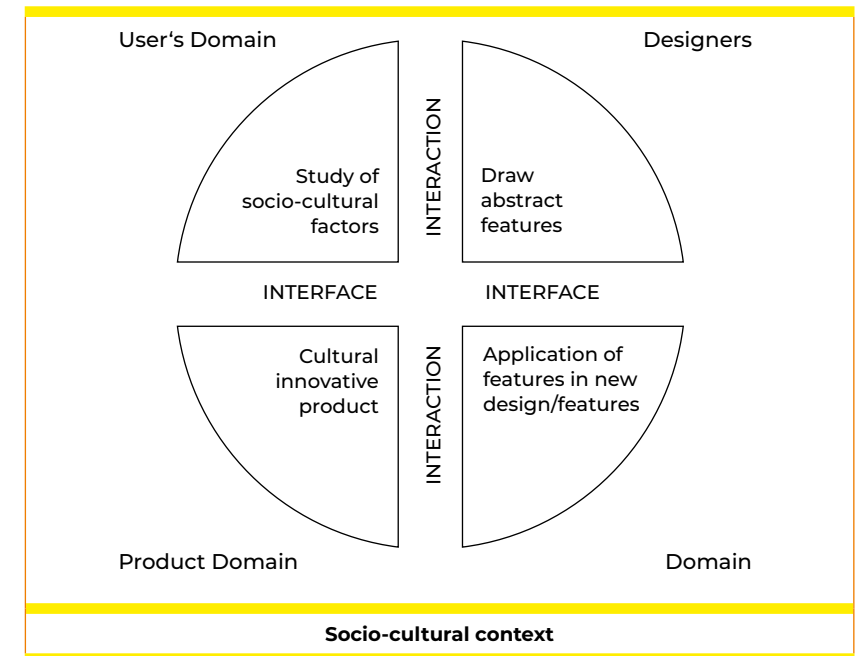


Figure 8. Culture-centred design model.

socially, as well as their future aspirations. They also act as powerful cultural memory cues; that is, they can remind users of past achievements and relationships, and can become concrete manifestations of the user's biography. Such an initiative ensures cultural continuity and building of collective knowledge, which will be reconstructed by the next generation to form their identity. (Assmann, 1999; 2006) Designs which reflect identity may enable users to have a social affiliation with others. Identification with a »valued other« enhances self-esteem and self-concept. To counter globalisation and homogenisation in the global world in which local identity is increasingly being threatened, local culture can be used by creative industries to enhance the user's identity and distinctiveness.

Above all, products that act as »mediators« create a spiritual bonding – spiritual value for users. (Throsby, 2001) Spirituality can be used as a source for cultivating a sense of what is worthwhile to human welfare and life enhancement, seen in relation to the individual and humanity as a whole. It links design to a process of social improvement that becomes the material counterpart of spiritual development. More and more users buy products for intellectual and spiritual nourishment. This indicates that the appreciation of pleasure in product use is becoming of primary importance, and users are demanding products that strike a certain emotional chord. In support of the latter, Tung (2012) argues that users' demand has shifted from products which compete with each other solely on the basis of price and availability to products which compete through their individuality, culture and design value, aesthetic appeal, and symbolism. Moreover, a well-designed product communicates quality and value and enhances the user experience. The study has demonstrated that some designers in the creative industries are tapping this niche area to drive innovation in the creative economy.

The findings of the study can be used as a starting point in teaching design programmes, conducting research and practice in the new emerging economies, such as Botswana. Design students will be empowered to appreciate their cultural memory and use it to design globalised products and services. The study has demonstrated to academics, designers and design students that cultural memory can be used as a source of product innovation. The proposed culture-centred design model will assist other designers and design students to gain an in-depth understanding of how they can identify cultural memory factors and transform these into contemporary product design features. The model will further assist design students and practitioners to be creators of contemporary user identities as well as pleasurable cultural experiences.

## CONCLUSION

There has been little in-depth research conducted on this topic, except for a few related studies which acknowledge the importance of culture to product design in the context of creative industries from new emerging economies. This study develops cultural knowledge and confidence in order to challenge the dominant Western culture in design practice, and advance local thought, content and solutions that

resonate with users' cultural being. The study attempts to address the gap in the literature because it proposes a new way of designing from users' cultural memory in order to add expressive values to products and services designed by the creative industries. The approach of design from cultural memory is offered as a complementary methodology to existing design methodologies. The methodology advocates for the basic principles of design to be grounded in the society's expressive values.

Therefore, the concept of design from cultural memory provides a point of departure for new design knowledge and new strategies in design thinking. It approaches design from a cultural memory perspective. Cultural knowledge and expressive values can enrich the contemporary design theory and underpin creativity, innovation and sustainable development in design practice. Designers act as catalysts for change by facilitating knowledge creation and transferring ideas from one source to another context in the community to stimulate the creation of innovative products. The approach serves as a design tool that connects users' heritage and an unfolding design future. Such an approach to design will enable creative industry designers to use local cultural memory and design distinct and unique products imbued with cultural meaning which encodes users' expressive values. Culture has become a powerful driver of differentiation strategies and thus generates sustainable competitive advantage in the marketplace. Commercialisation of such products may in one way contribute to job creation, income-generation, export earnings, and sustainable human development of the local communities.

## NOTE

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# EDUCATING THE LIMINAL IMAGINATION OF THE DESIGNER

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The pedagogical models implemented by design education are becoming central to any reflection on globalisation in a world where the political conditions of the present are embodied in the material and immaterial novelties consumed by people all over the planet. The logics of globalisation and the issues of social justice, diversity, and environment, as well as ethnicity, nationalism and gender, affect design as a social practice, and design as a practice for social change. They foster the redefinition of design pedagogy as an alternative site of production for renewed cultural forms that are aesthetically, symbolically and materially at the crossroads of the dynamic circulation of people, ideas, artefacts and cultural heritages.

While the number of nomadic students with various cultural backgrounds keeps increasing in European and Northern American design schools and universities, the design studio tends to become a dialogue space between multiple, sometimes conflicting or clashing cultural perspectives, in which questions of community, exile, migration, memory, racism, colonialism, localism and globalism can generate anxieties, doubts and tensions within the academic ecosystem. This reality is progressively becoming tangible in more southern areas of the world, from India and China to Latin America, Eastern Asia or Australia, where design universities attract more and more geographically and culturally mobile students, as well as displaced faculty and researchers from other continents. This cultural twist generates a new nexus of materialities in historicities, temporalities and geographies that need to be addressed by design educators in creative ways, at the confluence of artistic practice, technology and humanities.

Rethinking the design studio space as a dynamic platform of political agency in which younger designers are led to reflect on the alternative production of other forms and meanings requires the anthropological investigation of different cultural sites and times. This progressive shift facilitates the emancipation of design students from persisting binary polarities such as North and South, East and West, Them and

Us. It encourages them to explore and contribute to the emergence of what Homi Bhabha envisions as the Third Space, a space in which *»we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the other of ourselves«*. (Bhabha, Homi K. 2004: 56)

In this article, I will attempt to question the critical positioning of design learning as a potential Third Space of exploration through the outcomes of a series of pedagogical experiences based on the dissection of local cultural contexts and historical narratives. The experiments will be examined as pedagogical scenarios of cultural articulation, their common denominator being the transformation of existing geographical and political antinomies in design teaching contexts where contestation can verbally, conceptually, visually and materially occur.

Cultural globality is expressed in the in-between spaces of contrasted materialities, spaces and memories. Design educators should therefore try to redefine its territories of research and innovation through experimental cultural initiatives that disrupt conventional teaching methods. In a highly unsettled globalised economic and political environment, this remains a quite challenging task. While multiple responses are negotiated in the academic context of what has been traditionally set up as theory courses, generally associated with the various fields of the humanities, practice-based design studio courses are often timidly engaged in the process of providing keys to remap new cultural settings at the intersection of the interwoven forces of globalism and localism. Design as a social practice of mediation between cultures is too often only questioned and discussed in theory classes rather than in the atelier. In today's altered cultural terrain, design studio education is certainly in need of new paradigms and renewed methods that incorporate various disciplinary approaches within studio activities.

In this article, I will focus on design projects that aimed at initiating students of multiple backgrounds into contemporary fashion design practice. By witnessing, circulating and operating within the mobility of *»other«* and *»in-between«* social and sartorial knowledge, fashion design students have been prepared to redefine their identity as global citizens provided with the capacity to reinvent new localisms and unexpected forms of cultural cosmopolitanism. The three initiatives are rooted in an anthropological approach to design as a social site and political space for the production of cultural difference.

## BEYOND CENTRE AND PERIPHERY

While design educators are being confronted with increasing levels of cultural complexity, redefining new territories of investigation and action within the design studio as a pedagogical space has become a necessity. This complexification of today's cultural ecosystems challenges design educators to continually rethink their methods and goals while dealing with human concerns, material constraints and sustainability issues that are a lot more intricate than the ones addressed by the former generation of instructors and students in design. As a programme director at Parsons Paris, the European branch of Parsons School of Design in New York City,



I have initiated several design projects with the aim of re-discussing historical agencies and displaced times with the students, and encouraged the fashion design faculty to explore new ways of remapping genealogies and geographies through design practice.

Among the experiments recently conducted at Parsons Paris, one stems from a short but greatly instructive experience that took place a few years earlier, in 2013, at the Academy of Art and Design FHNW at Basel, in relation to a broader project on bodies and space organised by Professor Bettina Köhler. As a guest designer and lecturer, I proposed an unusual topic to a group of fashion design students most of whom were Swiss and German, based on the data of a research project I was conducting on contemporary Indian fashion. Our aim was to take the Basel students beyond the eurocentric perspective to which they were accustomed, and let them transcend the idea of centre and periphery. After an exhaustive seminar on the techniques, history, rituals, uses and symbols of the Indian sari, we discussed the evolution of its draped forms and textiles during the colonial era and after the independence of the country in 1947. In the second part of the presentation, I introduced the work of a selection of contemporary Delhi-based designers amongst whom was Amit Aggarwal. I shared some abstracts of the interview I had just conducted with him and showed pictures to illustrate his research work and most recent production. The students could examine the stylistic, morphological, functional and decorative features of the clothing pieces designed by Aggarwal and produced in India since 2012. Analysing non-Western designers' work and their research processes helped the students cross the first cultural threshold and question the hegemony of European and Northern American fashion in today's global landscape.

However, the second threshold was a bit more complicated to cross. After the students read the brief of the creative part of the workshop and understood that they would have to draw from the Indian sari to design contemporary clothes for an Indian wearer, and not for themselves or for Western users, they felt quite unsettled. Some immediately showed their discontent and frustration before starting to work. Among the spontaneous reactions of the students about the target imposed on them, I could hear: *»Why should they [the Indian people] be interested in a garment made by a European designer? They have their own designers to work for them.«* Or: *»This exercise restrains my freedom because I am not really interested in working for these people.«* Also, *»Indian women would anyway hate anything coming from us!«* A student asked: *»Why shouldn't we design ›normally‹, then they buy things from our collections if they want to?«*. In the first hour of the practical workshop, I had to negotiate the antagonistic feelings expressed in class to raise awareness about the benefits of such an unconventional process. I explained carefully why the experiment would stimulate the students' curiosity and foster a cooperative and humanistic approach to innovation. More pragmatically, I highlighted the importance of acquiring the ability to integrate the huge Indian market and the highly globalised fashion economy. After forcing themselves to think, draw garments, and choose textiles and colours for a potential Indian wearer, the students progressively became more familiar with the

idea of designing for non-Western users who have a different cultural background and lifestyle than their own. While a minority of participants kept expressing criticism and reluctance towards the project orientation, most of them showed great satisfaction and produced relevant proposals by the end of the workshop. Despite the disruptive process they had to follow, they evidently broadened their perception of their own position in the world as universal designers with an enlarged vision of their own identity as Swiss or European change makers.

The Indian initiative allowed the students to reinvent design postures and processes in a virtually relocated context, following their short immersion in another social reality and sartorial culture. While the experience certainly disturbed their Eurocentric positionality, the awareness of the multiplicity of dress and bodily cultures, markets, everyday life rituals, and women's statuses and social behaviours in other areas of the world, pushed them to temporarily adopt an anthropological approach based on a non-hegemonic perspective. In the following years, I developed similar projects at Parsons Paris, with students of more diverse origins, in classes mostly composed of participants from around the world, half of whom were not Western Europeans nor Northern Americans. With cultures that span from Argentina, Sudan, Brazil, Lebanon, Vietnam and Mexico to Korea, Russia or China, addressing *»the unrepresented pasts that haunt the historical present«* (Bhabha, 2014: 18) in the studio space started to take on a more tangible meaning. In such an international teaching context, the global nomadic citizen becomes the student herself or himself. This configuration gave rise to an entirely new set of questions and postures. Nonetheless, a similar amount of doubtfulness and suspicion could sometimes be observed among the participants.

In January 2019, the design project proposed to a group of sophomores, in their first year of specialisation in fashion design, focused on Chinese dress and bodily practices. Students were invited to examine the uses and techniques of traditional and modern clothing through various eras of China's history. They discovered the wide variety of contemporary designers who are currently active in a country that remains associated, in the West, with fast fashion and low-cost clothing. The design project also integrated the questioning of cultural appropriation in today's globalised world, after an accurate analysis of some iconic pieces inspired by Chinese dress and designed by Yves Saint Laurent (1936-2008) between the mid-seventies and the mid-nineties. Among the Chinese and Chinese-American students participating in this project, a minority observed that *»it is quite surprising to have to work on Chinese heritage when all Chinese people dream of being in Paris to learn about French luxury fashion and Haute Couture«*. However, the majority of students with a Chinese ancestor admitted their total lack of knowledge about China's history of dress and admitted they only had a vague idea of how their grandparents looked like in old family photos. They engaged with a lot of interest and curiosity in the project, looking for the first time at books on Chinese dress and studying traditional pieces in the collections of Parisian museums such as Musée National des Arts Asiatiques Guimet and Musée du

Quai Branly Jacques Chirac, like the other participants. Among the rest of the class, a few young Northern American students expressed their reluctance to spend time on such research. A student observed: *»To me, China is and will always be more connected to fast fashion, pollution and unsustainable conditions of production, certainly not to cultural heritage.«* Others asked if they could be allowed to focus on the heritage of another country because *»China is too far from us«*. I explained that, since the history of fashion course as it is currently taught is still entirely focused on Western dress, the design studio platform was the only experimental space in which non-Western rituals, forms of clothing and sartorial techniques could be anthropologically explored and understood.

After a short phase of procrastination, the students could produce consistent research and design concepts that led to liminal cultural interpretations translated into *»Third Space«* contemporary pieces of design. Like in Basel a few years earlier, the exercise shed new light on three fundamental positions:

- The affirmation that design innovation and the expression of social change through renewed discourses and materialities, aesthetics, bodily postures and appearances are not the prerogative of the West. They have been and still are shared throughout the world, following specific paces and expressions at each local cultural site. The anthropological approach and the broad definition of fashion as a human ritual that translates into new forms, textures, sensoriality, bodily techniques, and social behaviour in all places and times, shows that non-fashion as a characteristic of non-Western cultures is an obsolete notion.
- The acknowledgement of the existence of local designers who produce contemporary design in non-Western countries and contribute as actively as Western designers to the reshaping of today's global and local material and visual cultures.



Details of experimental prints and embroidery developed by a sophomore student in fashion design. – *»Otherness«, design studio project, Parsons Paris, Spring 2019.*

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- The acceptance of the idea of *»designing for others«*, meaning the project of innovating for global citizens of non-Western cultural backgrounds, living in the South or East of today's world. This displaced design posture leads to the exploration of the historical roots, habits and existing material culture of people whose cultural or ethnic group is different from the one to which the designer belongs, in an effort to imagine meaningful design concepts and artefacts that fit into other local cultural realities.

## INTERTWINED LEGACIES

The idea of liminal design has been enhanced to move the positions of enunciation of young design students with the purpose of encouraging them to alienate the boundaries of contemporary material culture and the geopolitical divisions of North and South, West and East. How do Western and international emerging designers welcome and address the idea of not only taking inspiration from other cultures, but of designing for postcolonial people from other continents, in emerging countries? How do they negotiate the antagonistic feelings they experience when confronted with unexpected inverted dialogues with the body and the sensoriality of the *»Other«*? How do minority voices produce contemporary objects and aesthetics when they happen to learn design practices in the globalised environment of a Western institution? How does fieldwork and anthropological research nurture design education today? Design teaching is examined in this article as an agent for the making of new cultural and creative identities in the process of being formed. It redefines the margins of hybridity in the new transnational spaces in which design practice and production circulate.

The project I will describe now was developed at Parsons Paris in the spring of 2017. Echoing the various initiatives promoted at our university, The New School in NYC, by the Zolberg Institute on Migration and Mobility, we decided to launch a research project around the issues of global migration and displacement in relation to identity and citizenship. The project focused on Syrian heritage as a way to shed new light on Syrian people and culture, beyond the migrant crisis provoked by the civil war that devastated the country. A collaboration was initiated with Musée du Quai Branly in order to have access to the exceptional collection of vernacular costumes from different areas of Syria. Hana Chidiac, curator and director of the North Africa and Middle East Unit at the Quai Branly museum, introduced the students to the sartorial forms, textiles, symbolic embroideries and colours of Syrian dress, as well as to the rituals and social practices related to this ancestral heritage. The aim of the collaboration with the Quai Branly experts was to raise awareness about Syria's rich cultural heritage, at a moment in which this heritage of humanity was at high risk. Once again, the students involved in this unique project were young fashion designers, in their first year of specialisation.

However, instead of confining the project to the stunning traditional pieces studied in the museum's archives, we opted for a more complex brief that included our students' own heritage and memory. The fourteen students were asked to choose





Study of Syrian vernacular dress with curator Hana Chidiac at Musée du Quai Branly. – »Intertwined Legacies«, design studio project, Parsons Paris, Spring 2017. © Parsons Paris, The New School

one element of their personal cultural heritage in order to weave a creative and intimate dialogue with a Syrian element connected to the original pieces examined at the museum. Hence, what used to be called the Aleppo-Paris project quickly extended to Aleppo-Monrovia, Taiwan, Vienna, Hanoi, Mexico, Los Angeles, Manchester, and the other birthplaces of the students involved in the design project. Except for two students who worked on an immaterial element of their family culture in relation to music, others brought material findings, from small objects to family pictures, in an attempt to address memory displacements and invent creative connections with the Syrian people, far from any kind of cultural appropriation or search for exoticness. The different nationalities and ethnic backgrounds represented in the class were so diverse that the conversational ties between the Syrian repertoire of forms, ornaments and symbols, and each student's cultural memory, went far beyond everyone's expectations.

In this project, the design translation focused on the construction of innovative forms and volumes in relation to the body and space. An exclusive collaboration with Maison Lesage high-level embroiderers allowed the students to develop a unique expertise in the art of embroidery in an attempt to understand the ties between ancestral craft techniques in France and Syria. They were trained by four French Haute Couture professional embroiderers, under the guidance of Murielle Lemoine, Director of Lesage. This experience allowed them to look at traditional crafts as unique technical tools to bridge cultures and invent new material connections within a boundaryless perspective. A student from Austria was surprised to see that the use of red and gold in the traditional dances and ceremony costumes of Syrian women was quite similar to what she had observed in the mountain villages of her country when she was a child. She decided to create a hybrid embroidery pattern and apply

it to a contemporary form of red coat for a global citizen who would move freely throughout the world. Another student who grew up in a UNHCR refugee camp in Ghana, after fleeing from her native country, Liberia, because of civil war, questioned the current situation in Syria through the lens of her own experience of displacement and exile. She brought back to life a creative technique used by Liberian children in their refugee camp to produce jump ropes out of used plastic bags. The artisans of Maison Lesage helped her integrate cut plastic ribbons recovered from recycled bags into abstract embroidered islands placed on the surface of a garment as a representation of the blurred identities and geographies that coexist in her memory. In this two-month design project, students were able to redefine their own liminal margins of artistic expression and map a new dialogic political space through a transnational and transhistorical approach to heritage and identity.

### TOWARDS A DETERRITORIALISATION OF DESIGN

In today's international art and design academies, faculty are confronted with the shifting cultural identities and changing agencies of their students. In this era of globalisation, while cultural and communitarian conflicts increase all over the world, the dissensions between personal and national identities sometimes lead to tensions inside the academic space. These pressures should be addressed creatively in order to avoid the estrangement of minority students. They can be made productive to reinforce the academic goals of the university and contribute to the redefinition of new design contexts and practices. The design studio or design lab therefore becomes a space where the positions of observation, cultural articulation and enunciation can be questioned and moved in order to alleviate the existing cultural and geopolitical divisions that might affect the life of international students.



Sophomore students at work in the atelier of Maison Lesage, Paris. – »Intertwined Legacies«, design studio project at Parsons Paris, Spring 2017. © Parsons Paris, The New School

In January 2019, we imagined and coordinated a design project entitled *Something Borrowed, Something Blue, Something New* at Parsons Paris, in conjunction with the centennial of the university. Fashion design students were invited to reflect on one of the questions raised by The New School's centennial year: what does it mean to pursue the new? In an era of rapid globalisation, severe turbulence and increasing complexity, investigating the conceptualisation and the design of the new brought us back to a broad range of political questions and ethical concerns. What is new to whom? This question was examined in the light of the reciprocal interactions between designers and users from different cultural, regional, national, religious and ethnic groups, as well as in view of the dilemmas arising from the growing influences, mutual enrichment, but also misinterpretations and tensions between them. How can the design of the new promote understanding and foster mutual respect among individuals and groups of distinct cultural backgrounds? Can the design of newness discourage the expression of cultural intolerance, extremism and fanaticism? The students in their second year of specialisation in fashion design had to rethink innovation as newness from the perspective of cultural diversity, one of the most crucial issues facing today's local and global communities.

The design project aimed at sharing and probing individual memories to design the new while strengthening intercultural relations. It examined material and immaterial expressions of centre and periphery in relation to dress and fashion as a source of new bodily expression, social behaviour, and objects. Directed by performing artist Violeta Sanchez, students conceptually and physically explored the body in movement to discuss inclusion, exclusion, cultural discrimination and diversity. This creative process led them to investigate their own cultural backgrounds through various elements of their personal and collective memory as valuable fragmented narratives that together contribute to unexpected interpretations for innovative design. Using the textiles provided by Maison Yves Delorme, the sixteen students from different continents worked in groups to develop together a sculptural wearable piece that translates newness while acknowledging the creative forms and practices of non-Western, Western and mixed cultural identities. This research provided the basis for a sartorial and bodily performance that included live making and draping operations in front of an audience. After one month of experimentation, it was presented on stage by the design students themselves at Centre National de la Danse, in Pantin, close to Paris. This collaborative immersion in the various cultures of the students led to the creation of an artistic event in which the ephemeral reconstitution of cutting, shaping, and assembling operations took the students and their audience beyond the conventional geographies of the official history, techniques, systems and objects of Western fashion. In a successive step of the work, they were led to individually and freely translate the experience into the design of a contemporary collection of menswear or womenswear.



Performance »Something Borrowed, Something Blue, Something New« by Parsons Paris fashion design students at Centre National de la Danse, Pantin, led by Violeta Sanchez, Spring 2019.  
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Performance »Something Borrowed, Something Blue, Something New« by Parsons Paris fashion design students at Centre National de la Danse, Pantin, led by Violeta Sanchez, Spring 2019. © Parsons Paris, The New School

## THE SHIFTING CULTURAL PARADIGMS OF DESIGN PEDAGOGY

Rethinking design education methods critically and regenerating the paths through which students are taught to produce their research involves the acknowledgement of the mutually constitutive processes of globalisation and design innovation. The experimental projects described in this paper all sprung from the same question: how can we consider cultural transnationalism, that is cross-border movements, activities, networks and transactions which link individuals and groups, as a practice that should be fostered in design studio activities? Students have been placed in the position of transnational innovators who act as what Homi Bhabha calls »*vernacular cosmopolitans*«, rooted in the assumption that the geographical and historical fixity of contemporary material and immaterial cultures should constantly be disrupted by design practitioners. Design pedagogy can be configured or reconfigured as a shifting site where narratives, temporalities and material cultures connect, disconnect and reconnect in an endless, revitalizing cycle.

The three pedagogical initiatives I have described in this paper were meant to introduce the idea of histories making geographies, and geographies making histories, through the analysis of cultural heritage and memory, and the exploration of vernacular craft and sartorial techniques, rituals and productions. Transcending the boundaries between local dress practices, traditionally seen as non-fashion or non-modern, and the material productions and representations conventionally

classified as fashion, has also constituted a valuable starting point to the reflection and research of the young designers. Lastly, each of the three experiences allowed the participants to investigate temporal and geographic interstices that are too rarely addressed in the design studio space. Fashion design students were put in the context of understanding and experiencing their design activity as an opportunity to invent and disseminate unexpected forms of cultural otherness expressed within clothing artefacts. These experiments shed new light on what we could define as the *anthropological imagination of the designer*.

Rethinking contemporary design education as a cross-border creative practice requires the preparation of the students to identify and adopt a decentred position that allows them to creatively cross bridges and passages of cultural difference in order to create their own projections of otherness through design. The pedagogical experiences examined in this paper have been envisaged as an attempt to deterritorialise fashion design innovation processes and let the students delineate them as local responses to the global. The complex entanglements of issues of ethnicity, social status, gender, colonisation, migration, self-modernisation, self-westernisation, self-redefinition of national identities, and resistance to globalisation, have been discussed but also visually and materially manipulated in the studio space. Students have been asked to develop their own creative strategies to adapt to the global world by attempting to meaningfully invent a personal and localised or relocalised design proposal. Because the spaces and histories of cultural displacement are embedded in such political and social issues, they provide emerging designers with experiences that allow them to radically review and update their perception of what cultural diversity means today and what it should become in the future they will have to shape.

Design pedagogy is a fertile ground for the constant disruption of the traditional territories of the dominant culture of the West. The creative productions of those usually associated with peripheral locations, histories and agencies should become innovation agents for younger vernacular cosmopolitan designers who experience new decentred positions and invent local responses to the global world they live in. Fostering the anthropological imagination of design students therefore calls for a differential design education that redefines the margins of hybridity, remaps genealogies, redraws geographies, and keeps questioning and displacing conventional boundaries to open up new possibilities and set up the creative foundations of interstitial futures.

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# ON THE AUDACITY OF FASHION IN AN AGE OF GLOBALISATION

## A TEXT MONTAGE ESSAY BETTINA KÖHLER

### GENERAL FRAMEWORK

From 2008 until 2018 the author of this essay planned and led study visits by the Institute of Fashion Design, University of Applied Sciences, Basel to Uzbekistan in Central Asia. These visits had first been suggested by the then artistic director, Professor Matthias Georg. He had sought a change from the usual trips to the fashion centres of Paris and Milan and instead proposed travel which would challenge students' understanding both of themselves and of fashion. These journeys with students in their third semester (the second year of their Bachelor degree) form the starting point for the montage of three texts presented here, and will follow an introductory discussion of the concepts of globalisation and fashion. The first text is a description of the study visit from 2016 which was published in the study guide and as part of the travel information provided to students. The second text reflects generally the goals of the study visits that occurred within the framework of a partnership between the Fashion Institute of Basel and the Department of Fashion Design, National Institute of Fine Arts and Design in Tashkent. The final section is formed by a text which looks back on an exchange project in this partnership.<sup>1</sup> The generous financial support and advice for this project provided by the Swiss Embassy in Tashkent meant that, for the first time, students from Tashkent, Uzbekistan were able to visit Switzerland – in particular Basel.<sup>2</sup>

The theme of globalisation was our constant companion throughout this time. It may not have been the centre of our discussions, but it provided a screen onto which could be projected all the many questions about the significance of the Silk Road in shaping culture and design within Uzbekistan's different regions, and its role in the migratory movements of ornaments and craft techniques in architecture and clothing. Without a doubt, this topic has become more urgent over the course of the

last ten years since the ubiquity of cheap Chinese goods in the bazaars and shops of Uzbekistan is now impossible to ignore. To a degree, though in different ways, Swiss students face much the same questions concerning globalisation as their colleagues in Tashkent, Bukhara, Samarkand and Fergana.

Much of what is expressed in these texts must – still – remain at the level of a claim, a wish or speculation. Much of what the trips triggered and set in motion cannot be visualised. Understandably, therefore, there remains a sense of doubt along with all the other pragmatic issues to do with costs and benefits.

Before we get to the montage of partly abbreviated texts, a short look at theories of fashion in the context of globalisation should demonstrate how crucial it is for a modern curriculum to anchor concept development and design in the cultural, aesthetic, climatic and political context – both past and present – of specific places.



Wedding party in front of the Hotel Uzbekistan, Tashkent.  
Photograph by B. Köhler, 2018



View of the rooftops of the historical centre of Bukhara, Uzbekistan. Photograph by B. Köhler, 2018

## CUT.

**QUESTIONS FOR GLOBALISATION AND FASHION THEORY** Those fashion theories of the last few decades that are most closely associated with observations of globalisation have often abandoned patient and detailed analysis of concrete examples in favour of constructing grand trajectories in their argument. Specific places with their cultures and climates, histories and economics, fashion and clothing products play a rather subordinate role in these theories. In a paradoxical way, theory's abstract perspective manages to combine the distinction between the global and the local – a stand-by since the '90s – with its positively valorised fusion in the »glocal«. It is precisely this densely networked world of fashion production and consumption to which Ulrich Beck's concept of the glocal most closely applies:

*Although people do not will it and are not even aware of it, we all live more and more in a »glocal« manner. [...] The oppositions and contradictions of continents, cultures and religions [...] arise in lives that have become inextricable from one another. [...] Our own life is the locus of the glocal.* (Beck, Ulrich 2000: 73)

If one broadly agrees with this formulation then it comes as a surprise to see how conservatively the concept of the »glocal« has been dealt with in the theory of the globalisation of fashion. There, the strict distinction between authentic tradition (the local) and an extremely dynamic, border-crossing fashion (the global) is maintained. (Teunissen, José 2005: 8 ff.) The »good« glocal is therefore characterised by the fact that elements of tradition and fashion remain recognisable, although they merge with one another. This is, indeed, how José Teunissen writes about the Indian designer Ritu Kumar:

*She designs clothes for the modern Indian woman who wants to dress in the Western style but doesn't wish to abandon all the traditional items of clothing like the sari or the salwar kameez [...] In this way a fusion style is created, a mixture of traditional clothing and today's trends, to a certain degree embedded in one's own culture and yet following international fashion at the same time.* (Teunissen 2005: 11)

A precise, concrete observation of the aesthetic relationship between indigenous traditions – the forms of clothes and the artisanal techniques used in their production – and international fashion continues to be difficult, not least because international fashion is seen as Western. »Fashion in the sense of constantly changing taste in clothes, was originally a Western phenomenon, starting with the importing of silk from China and later cotton and cashmere from India.« (Teunissen 2005: 13)

Still less often does one encounter the belief that even in India, Peru, Uzbekistan, or Georgia a new fashion – one which cannot be rationally explained – might emerge spontaneously and go on to become internationally accepted. There is still the implicit assumption that international fashion arises in close proximity to the capitals of Paris, London, New York, Milan, Tokyo. Even the admission that it is precisely under the conditions of globalisation that fashion has become polycentric,

and that beyond those metropolises and the whole architecture of Western design fashion is still produced and sold, cannot shake this idea (Skov, Lise 2001: 138). That the unpredictable novelty of fashion might emerge in the »not-so-global-cities«, as Lise Skov has called them – that is, without the constant attention of the media and the permanent presence of fashion discourse (Skov 2001: 153) – seems to lie beyond »directed mental readiness«:

*One cannot, simply and immediately, see something new and different. First, the entire thinking style must be changed, the entire intellectual mood must be unsettled, and the brute force of the directed mental readiness must cease. A specific intellectual unrest must arise and a change of the moods of a thought collective, which is the necessary condition for creating simultaneously the possibility and necessity of seeing something new and different.*

(Fleck, Ludwik 1986 [1935]: 74–75)

That fashion history has only slowly entered the consciousness of the »not-so-global-cities« of the world has surely contributed to this lack of mental readiness.<sup>3</sup> A research collective set up in Japan has aimed to close this gap through its ongoing investigative work and so deconstruct colonial prejudices about fashion and the West:

*The Research Collective for Decolonizing Fashion (RCDF) was established to end the stubbornly persistent euro- and ethnocentric underpinnings of dominant fashion discourse and to construct alternative narratives. The RCDF acknowledges that fashion systems are diverse, whether independent of (historically), or influenced by (more recently), Western-dominated fashion. It encourages critical investigation and dialogue into that commonly denied, forgotten or otherwise hidden diversity, and explores interconnections among fashion systems outside the dominant »world fashion city« network, by providing a multidisciplinary and multicultural forum where new critical paradigms can be developed from cross-cultural perspectives.* (RCDF)

But it may be that beyond the narrative account of any given regime of repression and its emancipatory release into diversity – that is, beyond what appear to be rational analyses and designations – there is a level of immediate aesthetic-emotional effectiveness, in which fashion is disclosed as phenomenon:

*Whoever orients herself to novelty is deviant (divergent). Whoever diverges from novelty, that is diverges from the divergent, is again divergent and in so doing confirms fashion. The simple and, at the same time, effective technique on which the power of fashion is grounded consists in replacing the distinction of conformity/divergence by the distinction of continuity/discontinuity, thus replacing a social distinction with a temporal one. [...] what is changeable in fashion is not accidental or more or less avertable but is planned from the outset and an essential element of its content.*<sup>4</sup> (Esposito, Elena 2004: 155)



Elena Esposito, quoted here, is one of the few fashion theorists to refuse to grant fashion, as a cultural phenomenon, any capacity to communicate identity or beliefs. According to Esposito – and here I follow her – it is precisely in its irrationality, in its unpredictable aesthetic leaps that the subversive force of fashion lies, not least in its strict segregation from tradition – which, as a properly modern concept, is »invented« in order to install the division of fashion's present from the past. (Esposito 2004: 107)

Without question our task – at least, one of them – consisted in guiding students on these visits closer to a practice of design work that would allow them to earn a living in an exceptionally heterogeneous professional field. I believe it crucial, therefore, to emphasise that Esposito's remarks on the irrationality of fashion do not mean that there is no possibility of guiding or planning a design process. One must, however, be very audacious in order to make the necessary formal and aesthetic decisions since, as Joanne Entwistle has accurately written, these are located at the heart of an economic calculation in aesthetic markets:

*In aesthetic markets, aesthetics are not something ›added on‹ as a decorative feature once a product has been defined; they are the products, and as such, are at the centre of the economic calculations of the practice. (Entwistle, Joanne 2009: 10)*

## CUT.

### TEXT FROM 2016 + STUDY TRIP TO UZBEKISTAN. DRAPING VEILS, PLAYING WITH ORNAMENTS.

A study trip to Uzbekistan, to the landscapes and cities of the ancient Silk Road connecting Orient with Occident, challenges one's capacity to see, observe, and experience. It represents an opportunity to work practically with artisanal techniques which still – or once again – provide an impetus for fashion and textile design, making it richer, more individual and more diverse. Reciprocal exchange between the West (Europe, America) and the East (Central Asia) has developed dramatically in just the last few years. This interest, particularly in Uzbek textile traditions such as *ikat* and *suzani* embroidery and printing techniques, is shown in the exchange and collaboration between Western designers and the artists and artisans who live and work in Uzbekistan. In modern Uzbekistan the old tradition of the Silk Road is still alive – even if it is very fragile. Samarkand, Bukhara, Fergana and Tashkent are examples of how important a wide trading network along with hybridising, cross-fertilising and mutually challenging cultures are for what we refer to (narrowly) as innovation or (more broadly) the creative economy.

Fashion is frequently thought of as the very embodiment of rapid change and mindless consumption and, therefore, as the frivolous trail-blazer for a destructive ideology of growth. But if we understand fashion instead as the acknowledgement of our desire for originality and change, for new departures and combinations, then it can contribute to a necessary cultural flexibility. It can reactivate what has been long forgotten or disregarded – such as certain craft techniques, materials and construction concepts – and give it shape in the present. For this reason, travel is not just



In the workshop of the weaver Fazletdin. Near Andijan in the Fergana Valley Fazletdin has developed his own combination of *ikat* weaving and the Jacquard technique.

Photograph by V. Chursina, 2015



Silhouette with ornamental patterns made in the woodblock print workshop with Yuriy Park in Tashkent.

Photograph by B. Köhler, 2016

about inspiration: it is an open-ended design experiment with a huge potential for changing people's views.

The task was: 1. Observation of another country's culture (architecture, clothing, textiles, fashion, spaces, social rituals). What seems alien, what familiar? Photography, drawing, writing – what appears to be traditional, what modern? Where do these opposites flow into one another? Which traditions would one choose to transport into the present, and for what reason? Can the radical questioning of Western European and indigenous concepts of fashion be made on the basis of these observations? 2. In the course of our stay in Tashkent we will run three, day-long workshops with craftspeople/artisans who are all creative masters in their own areas. Woodblock printing with Yuriy Park, band weaving with Yulduz Mamadiyeva and an embroidery workshop with Madina Kasimbaeva. You have the opportunity of trying out these techniques by observing and experimenting (material is provided on location) and to develop your own local/global grammar of ornament, colour and materials with which to play or create. These experiments will all contribute to the silhouette which slowly takes shape during the workshops, but which will not be fully realised until the final workshop day.



## CUT.

### A TEXT ON STUDY VISITS TO UZBEKISTAN FROM THE YEAR 2016, WRITTEN WHILE LOOKING BACK ON THE SIGNING OF THE MEMORANDUM OF MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING.

In an age of seemingly effortless access to images and information via a global network of servers and computers, bloggers and readers, in the age of Skype and Virtual Reality, travel – even to far-off countries – might appear to be redundant.

»*Arise from the sea like rain clouds – travel!*« (Farid Ad-Din 'Attar, ca. 1145–1221)

Long ago, the Persian mystic Farid Ad-Din 'Attar chose the metaphor of a rain cloud rising from the sea as a striking way of describing travel. If one takes the metaphor out of its mystical context, we can glimpse an ageless and liberating view of travel: an easy, natural movement of rising and going forth. There is no difficult decision, no longing for the exotic. Rather, one gives oneself up to the wind and the possibilities of geography. This kind of travel is full of surprises and encounters, which may be neither planned nor desired. They simply occur and one must react to them. Such travel demands a fundamental openness and a tireless readiness »to act«. »*To travel like the rain clouds*« is a challenge. It lets travellers experience, in a novel and intuitive way, the creativity of vision and design as mutually interpenetrating actions.

It was precisely this kind of travel that the study visits of the Institute of Fashion Design to Uzbekistan were to encourage. The senses are stimulated, habitual conventions and judgements are placed in question by an unusual foreign environment, and new friendships and working relationships with Uzbek students are formed and developed. These visits are a classic case of having one's personal boundaries transcended by physical, intellectual and emotional journeys. They encourage, therefore, the development of an individual's own design work in ways that cannot be foreseen.

Some of the oldest cities in the world are to be found in today's Uzbekistan. Urbanisation, together with technical-aesthetic innovations in textiles, in ceramics and metal, in mathematics and astronomy allowed this region to become a central »server« of the ancient and medieval world. Uzbekistan as »server« was a key part of the Silk Road which connected Orient with Occident through a complex, highly ramified trade and transport network, a network that produced a constant migration of ideas, languages and products. Out of this interchange of migration, concentration, reshaping and joyful design there emerged – and still emerge – interesting, beautiful, raw, and wild things. Architecture, textiles, ornamentation, artisan techniques, jewellery, clothing, fashion. They have a dense aesthetic presence. Upon leaving the airport at Tashkent these rays of colour and ornament already radiate into our own atmosphere.

Since 2008 we have travelled in the third semester of the Bachelor's degree – and with varying itineraries and themes – to Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, Fergana, Margilan, and Khiva. We ran craft workshops in September 2016 as we also had on previous trips. These workshops were planned together with Prof. Vera Chursina

from our partner institute in Tashkent. Our students were able to work actively with students from Tashkent to dye silk, embroider, print material with wooden patterns, weave, and finally design a silhouette in which all these experiments were brought together to produce a new, unique composition. We hope that these travel projects will lead to fundamental changes in our understanding of fashion, changes which will require independence, individuality and audacity: the audacity to be self-reliant, as well as to work in a team, and the audacity to act responsibly with respect to Industry 4.0.

Since 2015 the Institute of Fashion Design in Basel has had a partnership (Memorandum of Understanding) with the National Institute of Fine Art and Design in Tashkent, a document that reinforces the intention of both institutions to intensify the exchange of students and teaching staff. Under the memorandum, students of the National Institute of Fine Art and Design are to come to Basel to study for a semester. It is intended that collaborative projects will also be pursued in which urgent questions concerning current developments at the interfaces between fashion, globalisation, digital technology, craft work, and aesthetic/economic quality will be discussed and explored in depth.



Chor-Bakr, necropolis near Bukhara, 16th Century. Photograph by B. Köhler, 2018

## CUT.

PROJECT REPORT FROM 2018: »FASHION DESIGN AS CULTURAL EDUCATION. PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES OF CRAFT AND INDUSTRY, AESTHETICS AND SUSTAINABILITY, THE FOREIGN AND THE FAMILIAR, THE CUSTOMARY AND THE INNOVATIVE, THE GLOBAL AND THE LOCAL.« (DEPARTMENT OF FASHION AND DESIGN 2019) — The project was developed jointly by Prof. Vera Chursina

(Department of Fashion Design at the National Institute of Fine Arts and Design in Tashkent) and the author of this essay (Institute of Fashion Design at the University of Art and Design FHNW in Basel). It took place from July to November 2018 in Switzerland and Uzbekistan. Supported by the Swiss Embassy, five students from the Department of Fashion Design in Tashkent – Diyorakhan Aminova, Nigina Aralova, Zarina Ismadiyorova, Nadina Makhmudova, and Shakhzoda Karabaeva – participated in the study visits which were at the heart of the project. The first study visit took the students from Tashkent to Basel, and the second was the annual field trip of students from our institute to Tashkent and Bukhara. Vera Chursina and the students from Tashkent, as well as three students from Bukhara, also joined our group. Finally, the five students travelled to various places in Uzbekistan which still have a strong craft tradition – places they had never seen before.

*»I am firmly convinced that study visits can change our situation. In general, travel is not popular in our country. We have to change our mentality. Travel has to be on the »must have« list in all our educational programmes, in every family and for every person. In a short space of time you experience an exchange of ideas, you receive a cultural education, you learn languages, history, economics and many other skills. Your mind becomes more open and you understand what people's aspirations are and what you can do for the world, for your country and for yourself.«<sup>5</sup>*

We do not simply want to promote mutual understanding and participants' (students' and lecturers') deeper knowledge of the academic system and fashion design curriculum at our two institutes. One of the main aims of the project is also to strengthen an appreciation for and the development of fashion design studies as a form of cultural education.

*»[...] firstly, this project was a fantastic experience for me. I'm convinced that my view of the fashion industry has been shaken up and changed to a certain extent. After the trip to Basel I flew home and wanted to take my work in a different direction, because [...] the presentations of the Basel students were very interesting. After the trip to Switzerland my fashion horizons were broadened. For example, I was impressed by the fact that the students didn't keep to any standard forms of clothing, rather they tried to make something different out of them even though the task was the same for everyone. That allowed me to learn new things.«<sup>6</sup>*

If one thinks of the study of fashion design as cultural education, then this implies a deep knowledge of the textile industry in both countries and of textile craftsmanship and its further development in the context of a slower, and therefore more sustainable, fashion industry. This in turn can lead to a strengthening of small

markets and national economies, and to the development of a more distinct fashion design that can form the basis of a designer's professional independence.

*»Yes, that's how I see it as well. Of all the visits in the regions I was really impressed by the one to Margilan, to follow the process of making the materials – for example, the adras and atlas fabrics. Everything is done manually, and so tidily and cleanly. I'd like these craft skills to exist throughout Uzbekistan and not just in certain regions. The study of the technique was fascinating. It won't be easy, but I think we should recognise that this is our most valuable possession. When I saw the range of colours of threads, and materials with different ornamental patterns I felt like I was in a treasure chamber. Getting these crafts back again doesn't seem so difficult to me. We can contact the manufacturers of special machines, we can also put two or three master craftspeople into each factory who can demonstrate things manually. I'm sad that our people don't see this art, because after looking at this work they'll discover another, new side to their professional life.«<sup>7</sup>*

The reintroduction of craft practice into the economic cycle through fashion seems crucial to us in view of the so-called Industry 4.0. The sustainable development of the social and cultural as well as the intellectual and economic capital of our countries requires innovative connections between digital, analogue and fashion craft skills.

In the first part of this project, students from Tashkent travelled in July 2018 to Switzerland to familiarise themselves with the Institute of Fashion Design and its curriculum. They also visited various Swiss textile firms and collections. Vera Chursina and I accompanied the students the whole time. Their attentiveness and concentration were always very highly focused. The visits to two of the most reputable Swiss textile firms, Bischoff Textile AG and Forster Rohner / Schlaepfer, who demonstrated their production and design processes in detail, showed that even the best technical equipment – including digital tools – does not by itself produce the high quality these companies are able to offer their clients. To achieve that, these firms always need there to be a robust relationship between design, craft and technical resources.

What the students saw and experienced changed the way they perceive and accomplish their creations in fashion design.

*»I believe that my view of fashion and my taste changed just after my return from Basel. At the start, their [the Basel students'] work was incomprehensible. But after my return it became clear that there were patterns and details in the clothing that I really liked. For example, in Colin's work: I was so in love with his work. I wanted to try on his products during the presentation. The fact that he used the cut of Samurai trousers, hakama, and the Futurist style was fabulous. As it happens, I'm not indifferent to Japanese culture. I used to be really frightened of working with colour (I preferred black and white) because I thought I might ruin my work, but after the students' presentations it was clear that colour combinations are able to present the product better. At the moment I am trying to work and experiment with colour.«<sup>8</sup>*



The second part of the project was connected with the Institute of Fashion Design's third semester study trip to Tashkent and Bukhara. The same five students from Tashkent and three others from Bukhara took part in a programme whose thematic focus was suggested by Vera Chursina and which proved to be an important and exciting challenge for everyone: »Fashion design as cultural education. Growing design skills by challenging all five senses.«

The students from Basel, Tashkent and Bukhara did everything together and were in constant dialogue and contact with each other, which was a very moving and encouraging experience for them. They observed, discussed, draped, drew, embroidered. We used distance, the unfamiliar, and a new culture in order to direct all our senses to new sounds, smells and sensations of touch. The students from Tashkent and Bukhara tried to approach their own culture as if they had come from afar.

*»I shouldn't be frightened of different experiments, because it really is just a course of study and it will be a good experience. The journey to Bukhara has helped me to understand that fashion is tied to the world through our feelings, and we needn't worry about relying on them in our creations. We should express our emotions through our outfits.«<sup>9</sup>*

To draw blindly from one's visual memory; to touch a structure blindfolded and only then to draw; to feel a body and then blindly drape the person – these were all challenging situations for the students.

In one of the last goldwork workshops in Bukhara the students got to know the first steps of gold embroidery from a woman who works there. As with every craft, the practice of goldwork demands patience, training, physical and mental concentration and tremendous skill in order to unite technical form and artistic freedom. When the students' ornaments were integrated into the silhouettes that had to be draped blind, we witnessed really astonishing results. The fact that the draping was done blind gave the silhouettes something fresh and delicate and this was a real pleasure.

*»As the final part of our study visits we always made silhouettes. Every time this process provides new experiences and ideas, every time it acts as a brake on my mental habits and stereotypes it helps me to wake up. It may be that that only happens afterwards and not during the making of the silhouette. In Bukhara we had an interesting exercise: we were supposed to make the silhouette blindfolded. That was a totally new experience, and you won't understand what it can do for you until you've tried it. Normally, I work with tight forms, that's my comfort zone, and normally I get an idea for these forms by creating a new design. But this approach is not the best idea blindfolded, and so I tried to work with volume. When I was only able to touch the fabric I felt much freer to enlarge the volume and I felt that normal sizes were not sufficient. Being blindfolded gave me more freedom. I was very happy with the result and with the new feeling I had experienced. I will remember this and use the knowledge when I get into difficulties. Since that day the expression ›to be done blindly‹ has had another, positive meaning for me.«<sup>10</sup>*

As far as we can see now, the project has contributed to a clear strengthening of the intellectual, aesthetic, practical and, not least, social and emotional skills of all the students.

## CUT.

**CONCLUSION** It has been twenty years already since Ulrich Beck wrote in the above cited book on globalisation that it might be necessary to replace the political and economic idea of the nation state by that of action in a transnational space. This would not make the state superfluous but it would render the concept of the »national« redundant. In light of this, Beck made a plea for so-called »provinces of world society«:

*Exclusive opposition along national lines is being supplanted by inclusive opposition as niches, locations, [...] As regards the dimension of labour, this could mean trying to strengthen world-market location not by doing and producing the same as what everyone else does and produces – for example, the ›market miracle weapons‹ of genetic engineering and microelectronics – but by exploiting regional-cultural specificities to develop products and forms of labour which can establish themselves without competition.<sup>11</sup> (Beck 2000: 112)*

Beck wrote that, emotionally and mentally, one would have to want this new organisation of work and life. That would require the audacity to abandon directed mental readiness. Fashion is predestined for such an audacious leap, but for that to happen it would both have to liberate craftsmanship from its exile in history and install tradition within the continuity of time.



Working together on silhouette forms, workshop in Bukhara. Photograph by B. Köhler, 2018



Yohanes from Basel and Diora from Tashkent during the workshop on forming silhouettes in Bukhara. Photograph by V. Chursina, 2018



**Exhibition of silhouettes in Ikuo Hirayama's International Caravanserai of Culture, Tashkent (2018).**  
Photograph by B. Köhler

## NOTES

1. The first two texts were published on the websites of the institutes and in the travel guide for the field trips.
2. From November 2017, this project was guided and supported by the National Culture Programme Officer at the Swiss Embassy in Uzbekistan, Makhbuba Saidakhmedova, at the instigation of the Swiss Ambassador in Uzbekistan, Olivier Chave. Professor Kurt Zihlmann, head of the Fashion Institute in Basel, was the first to make contact with the Embassy. The project ran from July to October 2018.
3. See in particular: Mentges, Gabriele and Shamukhitdinova, Lola (eds. 2013). *Modernity of Tradition*. Münster: Waxmann; also: Jens, Heike and Hofmann, Viola (eds. 2019). *Fashion and Materiality. Cultural Practices, Global Contexts*. London: Bloomsbury.
4. Translator's note: Quotation translated by the translator of this article.
5. Zarina Ismadiyorova to my question: »How did the trip to Basel and the study trips in Uzbekistan with the Basel group change your perception of fashion study?« November 2018.
6. Shakzoda Karabaeva to my question: »How did the trip to Basel and the study trips in Uzbekistan with the Basel group change your perception of fashion study?« November 2018.
7. Shakzoda Karabaeva to my question: »Is there something in the textile culture of your country (in the places you have visited) that you miss in the fashion of your city, and that you would like to make fashionable again?« November 2018.
8. Shakzoda Karabaeva to my question: »In what way do you think your taste has been affected by your visit to Switzerland and the following study visit? Are there things you now like that you didn't use to?« November 2018.
9. Nadina Makhmudova to my question: »How did the trip to Basel and the study trips in Uzbekistan with the Basel group change your perception of fashion study?« November 2018.
10. Zarina Ismadiyorova to my question: »In what way do you think your taste has been affected through your visit to Switzerland and the following study visit? Are there things you now like that you didn't use to?« November 2018.
11. Translator's note: In the German original, Beck uses the word »Weltmarktstellung« which may be more accurately translated as »world-market position«.

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# CO-CREATED DESIGN SOLUTIONS TO MITIGATE HUMAN-ELEPHANT CONFLICT IN BOTSWANA

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*The human-elephant conflict appears to be a complex challenge that threatens food security and livelihood in rural areas in Botswana. A number of mitigation innovations have been developed to curb the incursion of elephants into arable areas. However, many of these mitigation strategies are unfit to effectively prevent elephants from raiding crops. Some of such innovations lack the local context, relevance, sophistication, and variability to accommodate the complex nature and adaptability of crop-raiding elephants. In addressing this challenge, a co-creation design process was conducted with farmers in two villages in the northern part of Botswana to co-create innovative prototypes that could deter elephants from invading crops. The study reports on the prototypes that were co-created to help control elephant incursions in arable areas so that the community could have food security and sustainable livelihoods. We argue that the co-creation process can be used to empower local people with new design knowledge and skills and thus complement their indigenous knowledge to solve their problems. It is also an inclusive approach that acknowledges the locals as a source of competence to co-create contextually appropriate design innovations.*

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism is the second biggest contributor to Botswana's gross domestic product (GDP) after the export of diamonds. It contributed 8.6% to the GDP as of 2014. (Statistics Botswana, 2014) Therefore, wildlife conservation is of paramount importance as a viable and sustainable way of diversifying the country's economy away from minerals. Wildlife in Botswana is highly valued and protected, hence its growth. This is a situation unlike in other countries where the animal population is decreasing due to poaching. According to the aerial census of animals in Botswana, dry season 2012 study, there were 207.545 elephants in Botswana. Botswana accounts for one-third of Africa's elephant population. For example, in the eastern Botswana Okavango

Panhandle, about 15.000 elephants compete with 15.000 people for access to water, food, and land. (Songhurst, McCulloch and Stronza, 2015) The increase in human population has resulted in some wildland being converted to agro-pastoralist purposes. At the same time, the elephant population has also rapidly increased, partly due to refugee elephants running away from countries where poaching is high. They then compete with local communities for limited space and resources and, therefore, access to adequate land for food and water. (Goswami, Vasudev and Oli, 2014; Van Eden, Ellis and Bruyere, 2016)

However, land does not increase, and it can no longer support the denser human and elephant populations. This has led to the human-elephant conflict (HEC) because elephants destroy crops and threaten livelihoods. HEC has been widely reported in various countries by many researchers such as Ndlovu, Devereux, Chiffe, Asklof and Russo (2016) in South Africa; Songhurst, McCulloch and Stronza (2015); DeMotts and Hoon (2012); Mosojane (2004) in Botswana; Chang'a et al. (2016) in Tanzania, Van Eden, Ellis and Bruyere (2016) in Kenya, and Dublin and Hoare (2004) in Zimbabwe. The term human-elephant conflict refers to any human-elephant interaction which results in negative effects on human social, economic or cultural life, on elephant conservation or on the environment. (Hoare, 2001)

Increased human settlement has been established in elephant migratory corridors and this has affected elephant behaviour and socio-ecology (Ndlovu et al., 2016; Van Eden Ellis and Bruyere, 2016). As a result, elephants raid and trample food and cash crops, leading to food insecurity and unsustainable livelihoods in rural areas. Dublin and Hoare (2004) report that the potential for farmers suffering enormous crop losses, can be devastating, particularly near harvest time. Ndlovu et al. (2016) also note that HEC results in economic losses through destroyed crops, raided food stores, damaged infrastructure and water sources, and disturbed livestock. As a consequence, people have developed a negative attitude towards elephants. For example, Chang'a (2016) reports that in some communities elephants suffer through reprisal poisoning or wounding or being shot as problem animals by game wardens and farmers in retaliation. Van Eden, Ellis and Bruyere (2016) also reiterate that elephants pose a threat to crops, homes, and lives and are regularly considered an unsafe species for local communities. In some instances, elephants have caused injury and loss of human life. (Chang'a et al., 2016; Chiyo, Moss and Alberts, 2012) Such a conflict erodes local community support for the conservation of elephants. (Dublin and Hoare, 2004; Barua, 2010)

It is against this background that a collaborative co-creation project to mitigate HEC was conducted at Seronga village in the northwestern part of Botswana with the local community, in order to develop sustainable solutions while employing locally available materials and low-cost technologies which will not be a burden on the community's lifestyle. (Chang'a et al., 2016) In support of the latter, Ndlovu et al. (2016:52) conclude that »[...] there is a need for an effective, inexpensive, and non-labour-intensive method of elephant deterrence for rural communities.«

The co-creation approach could bring a new paradigm shift in thinking creatively to promote the coexistence of elephants and local communities rather than reduce the conflict between humans and elephants. In support of this approach King, Soltis, Douglas-Hamilton, Savage, Vollrath and Bee (2010) postulate that there is a need for an effective, inexpensive, and non-labour-intensive method of elephant deterrence for rural communities. The adoption of such a co-creative approach to HEC could result in an effective and sustainable mitigation strategy that could improve the local community's tolerance to elephants and reduce crop losses, injury and death to both animals and humans. That is, we should accept that elephants and humans need to share the landscape, and those co-created solutions should not be based on strategies fighting the elephants but rather on working with the local community to accommodate elephants in their daily lives.

## MITIGATING STRATEGIES TO HUMAN-ELEPHANT CONFLICT

There are various mitigating strategies which have been tried by local communities such as: traditional deterrents; disturbing elephants when close to the areas of potential conflict; killing problem elephants; translocation of problem elephants; building physical barriers; olfactory repellents; relocating agricultural activities and changing cropping regimes; creating secure routes or corridors for elephants; repositioning the boundaries of protected areas; and chemical deterrents. (Dublin and Hoare, 2004; Hanks, 2006; Ndlovu et al., 2016) However, most of these mitigating strategies are often very expensive for rural communities with their limited economic opportunities.

In order to find solutions to the HEC, a number of traditional deterrent methods have been explored such as having watchmen, driving elephants away by banging drums and/or tin cans, shouting, cracking whips and lighting fires, throwing stones, putting up spotlights, setting out chili (*Capsicum frutescens*), releasing African bees, using projectiles, clearing areas around fields to enable farmers to see elephants before they get too close, erecting low-cost barriers, planting thorny plants as 'live fencing', building pit traps, and using dogs. (Van Eden, Ellis and Bruyere, 2016; Ndlovu et al., 2016; Chang'a et al., 2016; Songhurst, McCulloch and Stronza, 2015; Hoarde, 2015) These methods are usually relatively cheap, materials are easily accessible, and local communities can implement them. Usually, they are not fatal to elephants. In most instances, when new methods are introduced, they seem to work, and as soon as elephants are accustomed to them they turn out to be ineffective. In support of the latter, Ndlovu et al. (2016) argue that the long-term effectiveness of traditional methods is still unknown as it is likely that the animals will become accustomed to the threat. Most of the traditional techniques require one to be close to the elephants. In most cases, elephants raid the crops at night, and this becomes dangerous for both farmers and elephants. (Chang'a et al., 2016)

In Botswana, the use of chili seems to have excellent potential as one of the most promising HEC mitigation options. The method can be applied at low cost at the community level, with the added advantage of producing extra income from selling chili. Farmers use chili in different ways to deter elephants such as burning chili bricks – the bricks are made of a mixture of elephant dung and ground chili. They are compacted into a mould and dried in the sun. The dried bricks are placed strategically at the farm and burnt to emit a choking odour which drives elephants away.

Another method is the application of chili grease to fences – farmers use engine grease or old engine oil and mix it with chili, and then smear the mixture on strings placed around the fields.

The third approach consists in chili peppers planted as a buffer crop – farmers plant chili on the boundary of other crops as the first plants' elephants will come into contact with when they raid the crops. Even though other mammals will eat the chili plant, elephants avoid eating it. (Parker and Osborn, 2006; Chang'a et al., 2016)

However, these methods have their own disadvantages. For example, burning chili bricks is controlled by the wind. The choking odour could blow in the opposite direction from where the elephants are coming or even affect the human user. Planting chili plants around the farm is suitable for small areas. Planting chili around a large farm becomes a challenge and is expensive.

Other methods that have been used to mitigate HEC include: killing problem elephants (in most cases young bulls); firing guns in the air; and scaring elephants away with vehicles. Standardised government financial compensation is not commensurate with the crop value. The shooting of problem elephants is not sustainable and cannot completely eliminate the problem. Chang'a et al. (2016) state that problem elephants are replaced by other elephants, and the problem will just continue. Moreover, it is difficult to correctly identify and shoot the problem elephants once they mix in with other elephants. Instead of killing the problem elephants, some initiatives have launched to translocate the problem elephants. Although translocation is widely advocated by animal rights groups, it is an expensive option, requiring skilled personnel and specialised vehicles to move the elephants.

The most effective method to mitigate HEC is to erect physical barriers such as fencing (cables, conventional and electrical). If an electric fence is properly maintained and regularly inspected, it can and has proved to be extremely effective. (Kesch et al., 2013) However, elephants are likely to cause severe damage to fences, and this involves considerable maintenance costs. (Slotow, 2012) High installation costs and routine maintenance make electric fencing unsuitable for rural areas, where there is often an additional problem of vandalism and theft of photovoltaic panels. (Hoare, 2001; Slotow, 2012)

## CO-CREATION PROCESS

Sanders and Stappers (2008) defined co-creation as any act of collective creativity (shared by two or more people). According to Ramaswamy and Gouillart (2010);

Zwass (2010); Coates et al. (2009) co-creation involves redefining the way entities engage individuals, customers, employees, suppliers, partners and other stakeholders in bringing them into the value creation process and engaging them in enriched experiences in order to

- a. formulate new breakthrough strategies;
- b. design compelling new products and services;
- c. transform management processes;
- d. lower risks and costs;
- e. increase market share, loyalty and returns; and
- f. generate more value than through traditional transactions.

The emphasis on today's enterprises should be to create a conducive environment where users' experiences are central to value creation, innovation, business strategy and leadership.

Co-creation is a typical approach to collecting indigenous wisdom and creating design solutions with social empathy and inclusion. It taps people's empirical knowledge, which is increasingly viewed as a key asset. (Coates et al., 2009) Designers have been moving increasingly closer to the future users of what they design, and this is changing the space of design research to encourage co-creating with users. According to Burkett (2016), the process of co-creation can be social in that it engages people to think about and design their own futures using their own creativity. Co-creation requires everyone involved to develop empathy, to share and to accept equal partnership in the creation process. (Fleischmann, 2013) The aim of co-creation is to enhance the entity's knowledge processes by involving people in the creation of meaning, value and relationships. This enables designers to build a relationship of mutual trust with stakeholders. Co-creation with local actors can be a vital source of knowledge about and understanding of the local environment, needs, and practices. (Ray and Ray, 2010) The co-creation process has been widely used in the economic sector, but very little in community work involving HEC. In this study, co-creation was used in engaging the local community to strive collectively for solutions to their challenges.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This contribution is an outcome of a case study on the co-creation process involving twenty farmers purposefully selected from the villages of Seronga and Gonotsoga. The workshop also involved ten selected design students from the Department of Industrial Design and Technology and four Computer Science students from the University of Botswana. In addition, participants included six students from Texas A&M University from the United States of America. This project was done in collaboration with Eco-Exist, a non-governmental organisation working on the human-elephant conflict in Botswana. The organisation approached the University to assist in creating solutions to resolve the human-elephant conflict in the aforementioned villages.

As part of addressing this challenge, a one-day creative making workshop was conducted to expose all participants to the co-creation design process which focused on designing with the community. (Table 1) In this workshop, all participants learned the basics of design and making skills. The workshop also served to bond and build trust between the visitors and the locals. Through tangible design activities the visiting participants were quickly immersed in the local context, and this also provided local participants with concrete examples for understanding the co-creation process. For example, the students and farmers developed a rolling box for pounding millet into flour and making wire mesh for preventing porcupines from entering the fields. This project served as an exercise before the main design task of resolving the human-elephant conflict.

The co-creation session was conducted to achieve an in-depth understanding of the serious problems that the community is facing with regard to the human-elephant conflict challenge. The farmers emphasized that they wanted an affordable solution. During the workshop, participants formed five design teams to include students of both universities and the community in order to address the human-elephant conflict challenge. The next six days focused on the design task to co-create solutions that will control the elephant incursions into farmers' fields as this threatens the community's sustainable livelihoods and food security. It was anticipated that such solutions will enable the community in Seronga and surrounding villages

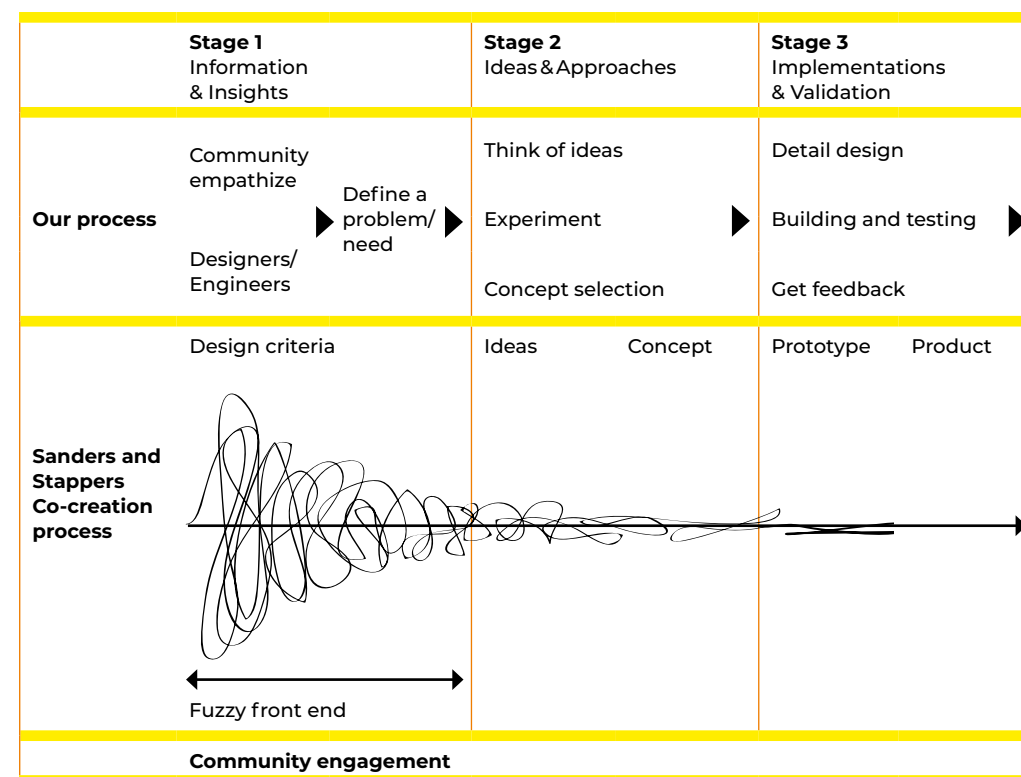


Table 1. The revised co-creation process after Sanders and Stappers (2008).



to claim back their dignity and have food security during the entire ploughing and harvesting season. All in all the co-creation workshop was conducted in seven days.

On day 2, after the introductory co-creation session and the focus group session, the teams went on a site visit to view one of the farmers' fields. This was done to enable participants to get first-hand information on the situation and available solutions. Participants took pictures of existing scenarios, that is, the strategies in place to scare away elephants. The interventions included hanging old metal tabs, chili cloths (old cloths dipped in a chili mixture) wrapped around the fence, bling-bling light, and dung balls mixed with chili. After this fact-finding mission, the teams framed their statements of the problem. This was to overcome the issue of elephants getting quickly accustomed to the deterrent. From days 2 to 6, the teams started to develop concepts based on the deterrents they had seen and ultimately made models and prototypes. On day 7, at the end of the workshop, the prototypes were presented to the community to get their feedback.

## FINDINGS

During the focus group sessions, farmers complained that elephants invaded their farms and totally consumed or destroyed their harvests after months of hard work. The farmers have tried all means to prevent elephants from entering into their fields

Strategy	Limitations
Chili dung bomb	<p>»When we prepare the dung bomb and also when we burn it, the chili affects us.« (Farmer 2)</p> <p>»The effectiveness of the chili dung burner depends on the direction of the wind and where the elephants will be coming from. If the wind is blowing away from the elephants, then this method is useless.« (Farmer 9)</p> <p>»If the wind is blowing in my direction, the chili smoke will choke me.« (Farmer 13)</p> <p>»The chili dung burner cannot last the whole night and eventually it goes out.« (Farmer 16)</p>
Using tins	<p>»It only scares off the young elephants, but not the big ones.« (Farmer 4)</p>
Rags	<p>»Rags dipped in chili solution wear off during rainy days and the rags are not enough to cover the whole field.« (Farmer 20)</p>
Guns	<p>»Only wildlife officers possess guns to scare off elephants, but they can only come to the site when someone has reported to them. However, elephants mostly invade the fields at night, when the officers have knocked off.« (Farmer 11)</p> <p>»Guns scare tourists.« (Farmer 15)</p>
Bees	<p>»They tend to relocate.« (Farmer 7)</p>
Chili fence	<p>»It is cumbersome to plant chili plants/to put fences around big hectares of land.« (Farmer 10)</p>
Dogs	<p>»Dogs charge at the elephants and this makes them more vicious.« (Farmer 12)</p>
Electric fence	<p>»It needs regular maintenance. For example, pruning tree branches near the fence because any contact stops the electrical current, and this will allow elephants to enter the field.« (Farmer 19)</p> <p>»It is expensive to install.« (Farmer 5)</p>

Table 2. Human-elephant mitigating strategies and their limitations.



Figure 1 (a, b, c). Chili crushing unit. Photograph by the authors

but elephants have proven to be intelligent animals. They study the deterrent put in place, get accustomed to it and render such measures ineffective. Prior to the co-creation workshop and as part of the information gathering process, farmers were asked to describe the interventions they have been using in mitigating the human-elephant conflict challenge. They reported the following as the strategies they have been using to scare the elephants away from their fields: hitting a drum, attaching tins to a string to produce sound, using bees, chili pepper (dung burner), planting chili pepper around the field, and scaring elephants away with dogs. However, farmers also indicated that these strategies have limitations, as shown in Table 2.

The farmers indicated that the use of a solar-powered electric fences seems to be the most effective method of controlling elephants invading their fields. For example, one farmer pointed out that »the electric shock from the solar-powered electric fence is enough to scare away the elephants as it does not kill them.« (Farmer 1)

Equipped with the aforementioned background information, the farmers and students collaborated to co-create prototypes that could prevent elephants from entering the fields. The following are some examples of the prototypes that were co-created during the workshop. These include the chili crushing unit (Figure 1), the chili dung burner (Figure 2), and the chili rag dipping fence device. (Figure 3)

Crushing chili into a powder form is a tedious process. However, farmers need large quantities for making chili dung and for dipping rags as intervention measures to deter elephants from invading their fields. The process is a health hazard because it is easy to accidentally inhale the chili powder which may cause discomfort in the nostrils such as sneezing. Furthermore, the powder can easily be blown away by the wind and may cause irritation to the eyes. The group design brief was to design a device which can produce large quantities of chili powder without exposing the user to the aforementioned hazards. The group designed a chili crushing unit which





**Figure 2. Chili dung bomb burner.**  
Photo courtesy of the authors



**Figure 3. Chili rag dipping fence device.**  
Photo courtesy of the authors

assists farmers in crushing large quantities of chili. The chili crushing unit works as follows (Figure 1): (a) lift the top lid, pour chili through the funnel and close the lid immediately; (b) when the arm is rotated, the chili is directed through a funnel to two metal sheets with studs that crush the chili into a powder form; and (c) the crushed chili then drops into an attached container. The process is repeated until the container is full.

The chili dung bomb burner is a mixture of elephant dung and crushed chili. The mixture is moulded into a compact block and dried naturally. The device works as follows: (a) the dung bomb and charcoal are placed inside a perforated metal container with a cap inspired by a Chinese sun hat and a handle for easy hanging on trees. The perforations of the container allow the smoke to extrude while the material is burning (Figure 2); and (b) after the chili dung bomb has caught fire, the burner is taken and hung on a tree where elephants may come by.

The rag (rope) dipping fence device works by using a rope, wheel and pulley system (Figure 3). The rags need to be dipped into a solution of water and chili placed in a container without the farmer having to touch them. The rags are then pulled to position around the field by activating the wheels so that they rotate. Elephants are highly sensitive to chili, and once they smell it, they will back off. As soon as the chili smell wears off, the device becomes ineffective. However, the device has been made in such a way that once the chili smell becomes ineffective, the farmers can reapply chili by running the system so that the rags are dipped into the solution again without having to remove them from the line.

## EVALUATION OF THE PROTOTYPES

Finally, the design teams presented their solutions to the community to showcase what they had achieved. After the presentations, some members of the community expressed their views regarding the prototypes, and what follows are some of the views articulated by the community regarding the chili crushing unit:

- »The prototype enables the user to have little contact with chili. I will no longer use the pestle and mortar to crush chili.«
- »I will no longer sneeze and cough due to chili odour because the crushing and collection of chili is done in an enclosed case.«
- »I am going to make more of the chili crusher devices and sell them to other farmers.«
- »I am grateful to the co-creation sessions, and the interventions will assist us to solve our problems.«

In evaluating the chili rag dipping fence device, the community maintained that they liked the concept, but reiterated their view that elephants are stubborn creatures which might at some point persistently force themselves to enter the field. The community also stated that:

- »The elephants would easily destroy the mechanism as they can force themselves into the field.«
- »The chili dipped in a cloth or ropes is not really as effective as chili that is burnt as chili bombs.«
- »The problem with the chili rag is that the odour blows in the direction of the wind, and the elephants might come from the opposite direction.«

However, the farmers were satisfied with the simplicity of the chili dung bomb. They stated that:

- »We will no longer dig holes for chili dung bombs as was the norm. The bombs will easily be extinguished when it rains. The proposed device can be used anytime.«
- »It can burn in the rain without any problem.«
- »The shiny metal container is good for reflection to disturb the elephants.«
- »The solution makes use of available materials.«

Nevertheless, some farmers suggested the following modifications to the chili dung bomb to make it more effective:

- »If possible, can't we increase the capacity so as to reduce the time for refilling the container bomb?«
- »We should find a way to make it more secure when it is hooked on a tree to prevent it from falling and possibly causing a fire.«



Evaluation of the prototypes. Photograph by the authors

## DISCUSSION

This study shows that exploiting the elephants' sense of smell offers the best opportunity for deterring them from invading fields and destroying crops. Since elephants are intelligent animals who quickly study any intervention and adapt to it, the proposed solution should be a flexible device that uses the sense of smell to make it hard for elephants to adapt to the technology. From the farmers' viewpoint, the proposed chili dung bomb unit offers a promising solution, particularly if the suggested changes can be incorporated in future developments. However, the biggest weakness of this method – that it relies heavily on the direction of the wind – remains unresolved. Nevertheless, this is a work in progress and there is a need to complement the solution with other methods. The other option would be to explore the use of the sense of hearing – perhaps in combination with using chili dung bombs – since there is evidence that elephants withdraw when farmers produce irritating sound frequencies.

It is worth noting that, in investigating design options for preventing elephants from invading fields, the solution should be affordable in order to enable farmers to acquire the technology without depending on outside assistance. Furthermore, the solutions should be sustainable to allow local farmers to make them from locally available materials as this will provide self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Additionally, the solutions should be durable, requiring little or no maintenance. If need be, the maintenance should be done by the farmers with little or no outside assistance. Above all, the solution should be functional. Piegorsch (2009) argues that tackling design challenges through this approach makes for a good design that embraces people's culture, their environment and economic priorities – and at the same time applies universal principles to the specific context in which they reside. It is expected that once farmers can somehow take control of the elephants it should be possible for

them to coexist. Currently, however, the elephants have the advantage, and such an unbalanced scenario is fuelling the HEC.

In addition, a more indirect form of knowledge transfer arising from the co-creation sessions involved the use of physical working mock-ups during the ideation stage. This helped in refining the proposed solutions. This also inspired the farmers to extend this method to other domains of their lives. The farmers' active involvement in the co-creation process led to self-empowerment in their future endeavours. The farmers appreciated the respect accorded to each individual regardless of their educational background, and this facilitated the brainstorming session and mind mapping of creative techniques where everyone had a chance to explain their thoughts. The more cognitively diverse the team (in terms of knowledge, processes, and perspective), the more creative and productive they are likely to be in solving new, uncertain and complex situations. (Reynolds and Lewis, 2017) Thus, in this way, farmers are equipped with »design thinking« knowledge. Students also appreciated working with farmers and learning from their vast indigenous knowledge system which in most cases is not documented. Students also identified new opportunities in the community for future engagement. Therefore, the co-creation workshop was of mutual benefit to both farmers and students.

## CONCLUSION

Since there was little time for participants to test the prototypes, the expectation was that the farmers would continue to improve the prototypes and test them in their fields. Working collaboratively with the community has shown that local farmers were successfully engaged as equal partners in the co-creation process as emphasised by Sanders and Stappers (2008). In doing this, the local community empowered and equipped themselves with »design-thinking« knowledge and skills, and they have the potential to generate sustainable and customised solutions responding to their future needs. This process enhanced their passion for finding a solution to the human-elephant conflict challenge. However, the proposed prototypes are at an elementary product development stage and need to be tested and modified. A follow-up workshop will have to be conducted in order to upgrade the solutions based on farmers' feedback. On the other hand, farmers have accepted the fact that they need to co-exist with the elephants due to their value to the national economy. The solution to this problem will ultimately be based on harnessing the farmers and their indigenous knowledge systems and incorporating appropriate technology that targets the elephants' senses of sight, smell and hearing. Evidence from traditional interventions has proven that the aforementioned senses are the elephants' weak spots in this regard.

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# LEARNING FROM THE STANDING ROCK AS A SITE FOR TRANSFORMATIVE INTERCULTURAL PEDAGOGY

## JILLY TRAGANOU

What are the ethics of design at sites of intercultural learning?

I will attempt to answer this question by looking at a political site of encounter that I consider paradigmatic for intercultural exchange in general, and for design education in particular. The site is an indigenous protest camp, that of Standing Rock (2016-17), a remarkable spatial and material artifice around which activists of various ethnic and political backgrounds coalesced.

In what follows, I will read Standing Rock as a site of proto-design as well as of proto-politics. I consider as proto-design the engagement with materiality that emerges when establishing a new ephemeral territorial ground, such as that of a protest camp. Proto-design emerges from the position of the non-expert designer often as a spontaneous act of survival in conditions of suppression, or precariousness. I consider proto-politics the process of both finding and questioning commonality, creating both otherness and a new sense of selfhood. I will be looking at the prefigurative space of the Standing Rock as a learning opportunity for designers as both political and ethical subjects that act in collectivity.

My informants, Dylan and May, were two participants in the camp; the first a US veteran who had recently returned from the war in Afghanistan, and the second a US rabbinical student and activist involved in Palestinian liberation work. Dylan was part of a group of veterans, some of whom he knew from his service in Afghanistan, and May went to the camp from Michigan where she was studying, together with three women, two indigenous and one African-American.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, my study has been informed by a variety of media reports, blog posts shared by participants in the camp, as well as films, such as Michelle Latimer's *»Rise«* produced by Vice.

Despite the fact that none of my informants, and very few of the people I followed in the media, were designers or artists, as we will see below, they were all involved in a major proto-design operation that was transformative for them personally, and also for the social movements they were part of. This operation helped them

to realise a new concrete vision for the future and to experience what it would feel like living in this desired society before it became a reality on a large scale. The acts of making and the broader engagement with materiality in this camp contributed to creating an unparalleled sense of community, as well as shaping the vision of a future society that the participants felt it is worth fighting for.

## THE PREFIGURATIVE POLITICS OF THE STANDING ROCK

I see Standing Rock as an attempt to create a collective home that »prefigures« a new society. Members of various indigenous and non-indigenous groups went to Standing Rock in April 2016 to establish a collective home, in the form of a camp. Like other such camps of the past that resisted certain conditions, such as nuclear armament, Wall Street dominance, or the unequal urban development of an Olympic city,<sup>2</sup> this camp resisted colonisation, neoliberal politics of dispossession, water contamination, and technological practices that damage the planet.

My use of the term »prefigurative« draws from the work of Wini Breines, Professor of Sociology and Women's Studies at Northeastern University in Boston (MA). Breines, in her study of the New Left movements of the late 1960s in the US, defines prefigurative action in juxtaposition to strategic politics, which are »committed to building organization in order to achieve power so that structural changes in the political, economic and social orders might be achieved«. (Breines, Wini 1980: 422) Strategic politics has »organization building and strategic thinking« at its core, while prefigurative politics »embraced the concept of community« and is more »anti-hierarchical« and direct in nature. (Ibid.) In my understanding, while strategic politics is typically exercised by organised movements and actions that put pressure on governing structures and demand changes, or by counter-hegemonic processes that seek to challenge or seize power, prefigurative movements strive to provide living examples of alternative social formations. They »prefigure« a desired society by creating the new »in the shell of the old«. (Industrial Workers of the World 1908) While movements often undertake



**Sacred Stone Camp.** Photograph by Tony Webster (cropped), 2016  
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both types of action, as is the case with Standing Rock as well, what is of interest to me is its strong prefigurative character.

Examples of prefigurative politics are proliferating today across the world. From New York's Occupy Wall Street movement to the Zapatistas in Mexico and the Umbrella Revolution in Hong Kong, the world sees increasing interest in practices that aim at prefiguring a future egalitarian society. Participants in occupied spaces, protest camps and self-organised communities prefigure new socio-political models through the collective creation of material forms and infrastructures of support.<sup>3</sup>

From a political design studies perspective, protest camps and occupied spaces are locales that can help us better understand the potential of creativity and embodiment in political action. While design and technology are at the root of many problems we face today, protest camps show a different approach to materiality and its relation with emancipatory politics. Anthropologist David Graeber explains this by claiming that inherent in the practices of creativity is an anti-alienating condition that is conducive to both artistic practice and revolutionary politics, and a link between *»imagining things«* and *»bringing them into being«*. (Graeber, David 2002: 73)

I believe that politics of radical materialism, such as the ones seen in Standing Rock, have a transformative capacity that is potent, transformational and lasting, and their study will help us better understand the generative capacity and potential of material engagement, and, by extension, design. Moreover, the Standing Rock protest camp is important for pedagogy. As a site of encounter it gave to its participants the opportunity for the personal transformation that we endeavour to achieve not only in political activism, but also in education, especially in transcultural immersive contexts.



**Camp Palestine.** Photograph by Paul and Cathy Becker, 2016  
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## THE ENCAMPMENT

The Standing Rock encampment in North Dakota began on April 1, 2016 and ended on February 22 of 2017. It included Oceti Sakowin, which was the largest camp, as well as Sacred Stone Camp, Red Warrior Camp, Two-Spirit Camp, the International Indigenous Youth Council, and various allied Indigenous and non-Indigenous camps. (Estes, Nick 2016) Standing Rock activists, under the hashtag #NoDAPL, opposed the plan of Energy Transfers to pass an oil pipeline under the Missouri River which is the main source of water for the indigenous population that belong to the Sioux tribe, posing a threat to their health, but also to that of millions of others whose water and land might be easily contaminated after a leak. By late September 2016, more than 4000 people resided in the camp, with thousand more on weekends. The camp was installed on unceded territory which, according to the Treaty of 1851, is sovereign land that belongs to the Great Sioux Nation. Members of more than 300 Native American tribes, as well as environmentalists, representatives of Black Lives Matter and other liberation movements, indigenous communities from Norway to Palestine whose sovereignty is being disputed, and groups of US veterans participated in the camp.

May was impressed by the coalition of indigenous movements that she found in the camp, and was particularly touched by the Palestinian presence. But she also spoke to me about her road trip to the camp and the bonds created with other travellers they met on the road, as they were cautious about their safety and potential threats by the police. Going to North Dakota from Michigan, they had a *»very long drive but not as long as other people [they] met on the way«*. They recognised the other protesters by their loaded cars, bringing supplies and equipment to the camp. The rest stops created particular place-times of connection and recognition. She remembers them as *»a really sweet moment of connection which speaks a lot to just the connections that [they] were soon to experience at the camp«*.

*We were really close to the campsite maybe an hour and a half or two away and we were at this rest stop. And you could tell we were going to Standing Rock from all the stuff we had in the car and how we were dressed and I remember just catching eyes with people in the rest stop and we kept looking at each other to see like, are you safe? Are you going to the same place?*

The need to be safe was paramount given the origins of these groups. Acting upon earlier traumas – the wounded earth, injuries of war inflicted on foreign lands, racial injustice, the dispossession, invasion, and appropriation of national lands by various settlers – these disparate groups came together to the Standing Rock to act in alliance. There has been indeed a lineage of wounds in the land of the Standing Rock. There have been fights between settlers and indigenous populations, broken treaties, abandonment. In 2016 oil pipelines threatened to harm the Sioux's water, their health, their sacred burial grounds, and their understanding of the land *as a system*



of reciprocal relations and obligations. But according to historian LaDonna Brave Bull Allard:

*This movement is not just about a pipeline. We are not fighting for a reroute [...] we are fighting for our liberation, and the liberation of Unci Maka, Mother Earth. We want every last oil and gas pipe to be removed from her body. We want healing. [...] We want to determine our own future. (Allard, LaDonna Brave Bull 2017)*

The acknowledgement of the need of healing was obvious by the prominent presence of the medic area in the camp. May recollected that

*[...] the enormous medic area was maybe one of the things [she] was most impressed by at camp. There were maybe 10 medic tents, one for emotional trauma, physical trauma, a tent for herbal medicine and healing, one for acupuncture and massage and there was a midwifery tent. I was just amazed at all of the medical and spiritual support.*

Dylan also noted that »rage or defeat weren't the predominant emotions«. He spoke about the sense of selflessness that everyone demonstrated, as people were taking care of each other, and the sense that »everything there seemed to matter«. He also described the way people from different political origins were coalescing, such as members of the extreme left and libertarians in coalition with various indigenous and other activist groups.

Water protectors, solar warriors, earth care takers, garden warriors, walking wolves, runners to DC, doctors, herbalists, cooks, lawyers, educators were co-constituents of the camp. Together with the river, the buffaloes, the wild geese, and the horses, they stood against the oil and the pipelines, the prophecy of the snake,<sup>4</sup> North Dakota law enforcement, exploding police grenades, attack dogs, rubber bullets, freezing water cannons, drones, caterpillars, multimillion dollar energy companies and other powerholders who in synergy inflicted new wounds on the collective.

After a long struggle, on February 22 the camp was set on fire by protesters themselves after the easement of the pipeline and a federal order that the camp should be evacuated.

## LEXICON OF MATERIALITY

What would an archaeology of the material resources of the camp reveal? A lexicon of things that were assembled at the Standing Rock would include a myriad of items:

Tepees; Camper Trailers; Tents; Square Straw Bales; Firewood; Pellets and Pellet Stoves; Carhartts; Winter Boots; AAA Batteries; Flashlights; Headlamps; Milk Crates; Water Crates; Lanterns; Solar LED Lights; Sewing Machines; Phone Cards; Gas Cards; Plywood; Flooring; Snow Vehicle; Ice Chests; Horse Feed; ATVs for Security; Snow Shovels; Walkie Talkies; Lumber; Propane; Goggles; Recycle Bins; Laptops; Portable Printers; Solar Chargers; Renewable Batteries; Generators; Wood Stoves; Basalt; GoPros.



**Oceti Sakowin Camp.** Photograph by J. Podlubny, 2016  
CC BY-NC 2.0 <https://www.flickr.com/photos/146536172@N07/31303635701/in/faves-182276196@N03>

Such heterogeneous elements were brought by the protesters as donations, and for their collective use while at the camp and then recomposed into numerous assemblages. One might be surprised to find objects like straw bales alongside others emblematic of today's unsustainable civilisation, such as AAA batteries and plastic objects in a camp that protested against systemic environmental failures. Despite efforts to enact a paradigmatic micro-society, we should also remember that prefigurative practices are not waiting for the moment of total revolution to unfold themselves. Their primary action is that of the assemblage. This assembled cosmos of the Standing Rock co-evolved with the social relations that were created among the camp's participants. As the new material establishment was being formed, a new cosmopolitical order was also co-evolving.

There was also a multitude of practices that created and sustained the camp: building tents; installing solar energy generators; building huts; deploying canoes to bring food supplies; creating collective kitchens and taking care of allergies or intolerances; nurturing one another, lighting fires and praying; getting together to make decisions for the next day.

May spoke to me about the Michigan host tent where she stayed, a much larger tent than the one she had brought, which was placed on a platform to defeat the cold.

*If I had gone by myself, I never would've thought to bring a platform, and it's so important because it was so cold, and the cold air just came up through the bottom of the tents. They had created this large area, maybe like three huge tents, that were all connected. They each had a platform and had wood stoves inside. The Michigan host tent had its own kitchen, and then there were other kitchens across the camp.*





**Medic Tent.** Photograph by Paul and Cathy Becker, 2016  
CC BY 2.0, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/becker271/31046281603/in/faves-182276196@N03/>



At the same time, both Dylan and May noted a duality in the daily practices at the Standing Rock: on the one hand there were those carried out by people on the front lines who were protesting and fighting against the enforcement of the law, and on the other hand there were those by people who stayed at the camp to make sure, as May described it, *»that the camp would run, building tepees, building tents, creating fires, building all these structures to be able to cook, and running the enormous medic area«.*

Dylan spoke about how participants were organised by skills: construction, EMTs, doctors, etc. But participants were not rigidly assigned specific roles based on their expertise. While Dylan was there, for instance, as someone who had army skills that were necessary for the front line, he and his group were also eager to help with the building activities. There were no clear gender divisions between those on the front line and those back in the camp either. May spent equal time at both and described a *»really powerful thing that happened when [she] was on the front lines, when people just started building a bridge together to get across the water to the Turtle Island, wanting to stand where the police was«.*

Much of the construction and maintenance practices of the encampment followed environmental protection guidelines. Individuals, companies and groups of indigenous origin with expertise in alternative energy consumption were present at the camp. One of them was Red Cloud, an indigenous energy activist who is in charge of the Lakota Solar and the Red Cloud Renewable Energy Center, that offers workshops and resistance training to indigenous peoples and provided solar power at the camp. (Elbein, Saul 2018)

Environmental protection was seen through a wider holistic lens. The website of the Indigenous Educational Network of Turtle Island stated that protesters endeavoured *»to minimize the carbon footprint of the Camp through utilizing solar and wind generators, and a recycling program«,* and they were also *»mindful of [their] impact on the local tree population. Therefore [they] ration[ed] the use of wood for fires and use[d] propane in the kitchens.«* (Indigenous Environmental 2016)

Indeed, camp participants activated an array of established and newly devised methods of inhabitation, from recycling and using alternative forms of energy consumption to establishing radical everyday practices of sustaining and distributing resources. Besides collective acts of making, there was also a collective approach to decision making.

*There are meetings all day. There is at least one meeting per day about construction. We have dedicated teams that work diligently for countless hours to winterize this camp. We look out for each other. We gather around fires at night and share food around tables bustling with conversation, and glowing with connection. [...]*  
*Many of us are here to stay. Many of us are coming.* (Mary K. 2016)

I see the material practices of the Standing Rock as socio-material experiments that generate the affect and the radical forms of habitus necessary for this new social collectivity to emerge. Affect is a *»mode of somatic activation«* that changes the state

of a body and that has concrete effects on the individual and the social practice while creating collective bonds beyond the realm of the symbolic. (Thoburn, Nicolas 2007) The term habitus, drawing from Bourdieu, connotes a set of embodied dispositions that people acquire by acting in society. But habitus *»has a generative capacity«,* it is not simply *»a mechanical reproduction of a learned performance«.* (Flesher Fominaya, Cristina 2015)

It is not only that *»social order is secured through habit and affect«* but that *»social change, too, is achieved through habit and affect«.* (Beasley-Murray, Jon 2010: ix-x)

May described the Standing Rock camp as a mini-city proving to her that a different world is possible:

*I work on police abolition and I think Standing Rock was sort of the proof that we can protect each other. That safety comes through solidarity is an organizing principle that we understand today and I think was exhibited at Standing Rock and proven to us at Standing Rock, and that's really powerful. The ways that people just stepped up to be in community and stepped up and did whatever they knew they could do well, and that we were all nourishing each other and supporting each other was remarkable. I'm still blown away by the medic tents and how people were just caring for each other. Also every night there was a big fire pit and songs and announcements around it, which I think is part of indigenous culture. Just seeing the way the entire community would gather every single night and come together is something I don't see elsewhere.*

At the same time the collective material practices at the Standing Rock articulated political arguments different in nature from the cognitive processes of deliberation that are mobilised for the expression of verbal political messages. They provided *»the motivational energy«* that is necessary to move people *»from the endorsement of ethical principles to the actual practice of ethical behaviours«.* (Bennett, Jane 2010: xi f.) And these ethical behaviours were distributed from the molecules of things to the pores of people's skin to the making of immaterial bonds that sustained this new society.

## ETHICAL DIVERGENCES

According to Nick Estes,

*[...] two important lessons were drawn from the KXL struggle that were carried into #NoDAPL. The power of multinational unity between Natives and non-Natives was one of the movement's successes. The other proved the transformative power and potential of anticolonial resistance to successfully mobilize poor people against the rich and powerful – and win!* (Estes 2016)

May reminisced about conversations at the camp which focused on what brought each of them there, *»why [they] are there, why this is their fight«.* She spoke to me about the deep connection she felt with these new encounters based on the common

belief in water as a source of life. This experience was truly transformative. Talking about the lessons she learned from the Standing Rock she reflects:

*I think one of the largest chants, water is life, mni waconi, was the main source of connection. Because we all came here understanding that water is literally life and that seemed to be the strongest connections people could possibly have no matter what other disagreements you have or are coming with. It didn't matter because we understand that water is the force of life and that was what we were fighting for, even if people came with different views. [...] This aspect of solidarity has just changed my life in all the organizing I do, and in the way I've seen organizing be divisive. I just always try to ground myself in what I experienced at the Standing Rock and what I felt there, because it was unparalleled, the way we grounded ourselves in the fight and in the words ›water is life‹. This is a mantra for me in understanding why I do what I do, and I think Standing Rock was integral in my understanding that environmental justice work has to be at the core of all of our justice work. Because if we don't fight to protect the planet, then all the other struggles that we are fighting for, when we win there's not going to be a land or earth to be won upon. So I think the concept that ›water is life‹ and experiencing the ways it was a connector for people that really believed in it was extremely important. I have internalized that and made that a piece of my organizing and my understanding of organizing.*

Nevertheless, despite their common causes and beliefs that »water is life« and their resistance to those in power who would threaten disenfranchised communities and the earth, the collectivity of Standing Rock ethics should not be taken for granted. Scholars of indigenous politics warn about serious divergences in the trajectories of those who gathered in the camp. (Coulthard, Glen S. 2010; Byrd, Jodi A. 2011) They caution that settler activists might »inadvertently erase the histories of [indigenous] movements« (Fortier, Craig Steven 2015: 74) and act by »flattening out the important differences between [...] how white settlers, arrivals [...] and Indigenous peoples conceptualize and practice land-based relationships«, (Fortier 2015: 244) by »homogenizing [...] various experiences of oppression as colonization«. (Tuck, Eve; Yang, K. Wayne 2012: 17) Several scholars of indigenous studies herald the end of »settler futurity« (Tuck and Yang 2012: 35) which they see being contradicted not only by settlers' neo-colonial regimes but also by social movements that, in their own struggles to »reclaim the street«, fail to address the stolen status of the land and the indigenous condition. (Fortier 2015: 13) For these scholars, referring to Fanon (Fanon, Frantz 1963), there is a deep »incommensurability between ›re/occupy‹ and ›decolonize‹ as political agendas«. (Tuck and Yang 2012: 23)

Looking back to the formal history of the camp as a typology that several political struggles (from indigenous to anti-authoritarian) have adhered to, it is possible to observe a disconnected line, from early US settlers and squatter groups to sit-in and protest camps activism. In this, one can discern different ideologies and

regimes of power that utilised the archetypal practice of homesteading. Indeed, and for good reasons, some in the indigenous community are sceptical of the motivation of their white, non-indigenous supporters, fearing that the logic of the settler is often inherent in their practices. According to geographer Alex Vasudevan,

[I]n the US history, squatting represented a form of violent displacement through which indigenous communities were dispossessed of their lands and livelihoods. [...] Frontier settlers in the late 18th and early 19th centuries were in most cases compelled to become squatters as the distribution of land was largely controlled by speculators and land grabbers. (Vasudevan, Alexander 2017: 17 f.)

These settlers formed squatter organisations while adopting a range of direct-action tactics (Vasudevan 2017: 18). The self-built, informal communities of the squatters spoke to a kind of independent life, makeshift and precarious on the one hand, resilient and resourceful on the other, while indigenous communities were at the same time deprived of their own lands. The romantic image of the pioneer settler clashes with that of the indigene, even though their practices might have formal similarities.

While a post-settler emancipatory vision is what brought some of the Standing Rock supporters to the camp, most of the indigenous population were there to re-enact their own lineage, to reconnect with their past, and to defend their territories. This might be at odds with the borderless communities of the anti-authoritarian movements that came to the Standing Rock. Their acts were to a certain degree synergetic, but we should not forget that their belief systems are based on different foundations. The indigenous fight for their right to the land and their duty to protect it. They see their relationship with the earth from a standpoint that is different from that of the settlers. On the other hand, some of the non-indigenous groups that joined the Standing Rock fight for the earth's rights in an attempt to put an end to the harm caused by our civilisation's excesses, such as aggressive extractivism. Their anti-capitalist struggle is often universalising and not specifically territorial.

Thus, while it is tempting to read Standing Rock through the template of the protest camp, for the indigenous members it was primarily a homestead, a process of re-enacting their lost home. And while this protest was an indigenous plea for liberation, it is also possible to see in it the claims of a new commons.<sup>5</sup> It is at the imbrication of the two where a new ground of co-habitation between the different groups was established.

## RE-ASSEMBLING THE SOCIO-MATERIAL

Can these conflictual histories be reconciled? As the world has become unsettled again with climate change and new waves of forced migration, these heterogeneous groups that coalesced at Standing Rock, despite their differences, shared a common intent: becoming part of a community of change which began with the making of a common home at a site of primal injury. This injured site in need of recuperation is a



microcosm of the world; its wounds are not just localised but deeply systemic. At the same time it has its own history, being connected with the indigenous population that has been denied its territorial rights, and it has been severed from its duty towards the earth. As Dylan put it, *»getting approval for every initiative from the indigenous activists was paramount. Protesters had to be careful where to walk, not to walk on ancestors. [...] Everyone there was a censor.«*

The making of the imbricated homeland that took place at Standing Rock had thus a dual task: on the one hand an indigenous imperative, and on the other the making of a commons that is open and inclusive. A commitment to decolonisation is the necessary precondition for the commons enactment, and processes of collective healing were at the heart of the Standing Rock camp. For Dylan, respect for the Treaty land was the most important responsibility of the activists, together with that of water protection.

Taking the pain of others seriously as our ethical imperative is necessary for any transformation and convergence to occur. For Elaine Scarry, it is *»the story of expressing physical pain«* that *»eventually opens into the wider frame of invention. The elemental »as if« of the person in pain [...] will lead into an array of counterfactual revisions entailed in the making.«* (Scarry, Elaine 1985: 22) Bearing witness to the recurring injuries that were inflicted upon the imbricated site of the Standing Rock, both to people and land, the most important counterfactual design innovation seems to be the making of *»embodied infrastructures«* that emerged from the collective action of the participants, and the inclusion of the inanimate in their collective identity. Central here is the idea that it is through a new radical intra-somatic engagement with things that the character of groups and individuals is being galvanised. (Traganou, Jilly 2016: 321) In the Standing Rock these embodied infrastructures were exemplified by the *»water protectors«*. The protection of water is not and cannot be delegated to machines. It requires the vigilance of the human. These human/engines embodied the spirit of the fight and the new collective subject that emerged out of this gathering. The acceptance and understanding of vulnerability was at the source of their assembl(y)age.

## **LESSONS DRAWN FROM STANDING ROCK AS A SITE OF TRANSFORMATIVE INTERCULTURAL PEDAGOGY**

What can the designer learn from the brief but wondrous life of Standing Rock? Below, I will draw several objectives from the lesson of Standing Rock as both a camp and a homestead.

The first objective is that the participants in the site of encounter (students and educators of design from different parts of the world) should agree and aspire to the goal of creating together a new community of change. According to design philosopher Tony Fry, *»the project of coming into community, gaining humanity and becoming part of a community of change, is an increasingly vital objective«*. (Fry, Tony 2011: 435)

The second objective is understanding each other through the thick history of the site, any given site. The site is a palimpsest, and we need to understand which are the groups that claim belonging in it, as well as those whose presence or agency has been colonised or suppressed, including humans and non-humans. Individuals and groups should unearth and acknowledge both the dispossession that groups and nations have experienced, and the erasure of these histories from the narratives that most of us have been raised with. Unpredictable actors might emerge as stakeholders in the process of excavating the thick history of the site. Our project should be open to all those present, but also to all those that are invisible at first sight, including life that is extinct.

The third objective is establishing new embodied material practices of collectivity. Through this process, new material and social practices would be devised by the symbiosis of different groups. Such practices are humble and humbling. Like the process of fermentation, they gnaw away our defenses and allow for a new common culture of respect to emerge. It is through the process of developing collective embodied infrastructures that the community of change will come together, and this is a space where designers can both learn from and contribute their experiences and knowledge.

And the fourth and ultimate objective is the participants' commitment to be guardians of the new commons that will emerge from this assembly. This deeper understanding of the land as a commons is a necessary precondition for practicing our care for the site and collectively developing a new community of change. What are the common resources at this site, and how can we together secure their protection? What new common infrastructures can we create, and how do we make them open both to the existing commoners and the potential newcomers?<sup>6</sup> How can we create commons without flattening or rejecting their histories? There is no other way but by seeing *»the struggle for the commons as multiplicitous and contingent upon a simultaneous process of decolonization«*. (Fortier 2015: 262)

The study of sites of encounter such as Standing Rock are telling us that the citizen of the 21st century has to be primarily a commoner, both at home and away from home. Design at the sites of encounter does not need to be grand but should rather aim at seeding the process of co-evolution and care. With a focus on creating the conditions for a new community of change to emerge, acknowledging and trying to fight the realities and residues of colonisation at the site of settlement and beyond, and establishing collective embodied infrastructures of material and emotional support, designers and proto-designers of different origins who are aware of the histories they carry and represent have the capacity to prefigure what a future, desired society would feel like.

## NOTES

1. The interview with Dylan took place on March 23, 2017, and with May on June 3, 2019. All Dylan's and May's quotes in the text are from these interviews.
2. See my writings on the Vancouver protest camp in Traganou J. (2016):279-82.
3. See forthcoming edited volume Jilly Traganou (ed.). *Design and Political Dissent*. Routledge.
4. You can read more about this prophecy here: <https://medichealercouncil.wordpress.com/preparation-faq/cultural-respect-faq/> Accessed on: July 6, 2019.
5. My definition of the commons as different from public space is based on ideas advanced by political philosopher George Caffentzis: »A public space is ultimately a space owned and opened/closed by the state, it is a res-publica, a public thing. A common space, in contrast, is opened by those who occupy it, i.e., those who live on it and share it according to their own rules. [...] The parliament and council chambers are temples of absence, while the Tahrir Squares of the world are places where a general will is embodied and in action.« (Caffentzis, George 2012).
6. See Tzirtzilaki, Traganou and Kazeros in *Nomadic Architecture*, 2018.

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# CROSS-CULTURALITY, INTERDISCIPLINARITY, AND GLOBALISATION IN DESIGN EDUCATION

## PERSONAL REFLECTIONS AND EXPERIENCES THROUGH TRAVEL AND STUDY TOURS

CARLOS MONTANA-HOYOS, LISA SCHAROUN

### INTRODUCTION

*Carlos:* I met Regine, Catherine, Anka, and Tatiana for the first time in 2014, at the launching of the Cultural Spaces and Design project in Australia. On their subsequent visit to Australia my former colleague and good friend Lisa and I presented some of the joint experiences we had gained during the five years we organised study tours for our Australian students to Singapore, Japan, and China. Just before our 2017 study tour to Singapore, I travelled to Basel for the final symposium of the Cultural Spaces and Design project and participated in fantastic workshops, meeting great people, students and professors from around the globe. Especially memorable were the trips to the river to swim and float downstream with the current, and as an industrial designer, I was intrigued by the beautiful, functional, and unique fish-shaped floating devices!

One of my students at the time, Millie, who was developing her honours project on the role of women in Australian Industrial Design, also joined us and benefitted from this fantastic experience.

In this text, we would like to discuss the topics of cross-culturality, multi- and interdisciplinarity, and globalisation in design education. We want to start with personal reflections about our journeys as designers and educators travelling around the world, studying and working in different countries, and how being exposed to different cultures changed our perception of the world, our professional disciplines, and our ideas about education. Subsequently, we discuss our teaching experiences together, especially through a series of study tours conducted initially with graphic and industrial design students, and which scaled up to include more than 80 students from five different institutions. Finally, we will offer some conclusions.

## PERSONAL JOURNEYS AND REFLECTIONS

*Carlos:* I was born in Bogotá in Colombia, and was very fortunate to receive an international education and learn English from a young age. I studied Industrial Design, and when I was twenty-three years old, I travelled overseas for the first time and went to Italy to do an internship in the Central Industrial Design (CID) department of Whirlpool Europe SRL. This experience was a dream come true, and it completely changed my personal view of the world as well as my professional understanding of design. Travelling in Italy and around Europe, meeting different people and learning about different cultures through first-hand experience were life-changing. Professionally, I visited many architectural icons, went to many art and design museums, and encountered many of the industrial design classics that until then had existed only in books and in my imagination. After Italy, I returned to Colombia and worked



Unique fish-shaped floating devices in Basel.

Photograph by C. Montana-Hoyos, 2017



Colours of Little India in Singapore.

Photograph by C. Montana-Hoyos, 2017



for seven years in industry, designing lighting, furniture, graphics, and ceramic products for various companies. In 2001 I started teaching part-time in the product design engineering program of EAFIT University in Colombia, and in 2003 I obtained a scholarship from the Japanese Government to travel to Japan to do a Master's and then a PhD at Kobe Design University (KDU). As part of my Master's, which focused on the topics of cultural identity and sustainability, I developed many designs which incorporated cultural elements from Japan but most importantly also from Colombia.

Japan was another life-changing experience. While I learned many new things through both degrees, the most valuable and memorable learnings came from meeting people and experiencing the culture. I went to Japan with very little knowledge of the language, and initially I suffered a strong culture shock. Upon reflection, not understanding the language was very beneficial, as it made me very aware of my surroundings and forced me to observe in detail people, places, events, and things. This experience was also incredible in terms of broadening my knowledge of crafts, design, arts, and culture. Experiencing the food, colours, smells, seasons, technology, crafts, arts, design and all the contrasts of this fantastic country once again changed my way of thinking and my perception of the world.

In 2006 I moved to Singapore, and I began to work as a full-time academic at the National University of Singapore. After Japan, Singapore meant somehow ›returning‹ to a country where you speak the language. Nevertheless, the multicultural environment made the experience of living in Singapore also very rich. The mix of Chinese, Malay, Indian, and many other cultures makes Singapore a melting pot where different cultures coexist harmoniously. The multiplicity of religions, festivities, and languages is amazing, and this all contributes to a multicultural lifestyle. On a personal level, the birth of my only daughter in 2009 in Singapore was also a big milestone and another life-changing experience. My daughter Laura was born prematurely at 6.5 months, and she spent almost two months in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). This experience remains to date one of the hardest in my life, and a strong motivation to focus my research efforts on design for health.

In 2010, I travelled with my now expanded family to Australia, where I took up an associate professorship at the University of Canberra. Having previously lived in Asia for seven years, returning to a Western country caused a strong reverse culture-shock. Being used to the Japanese and Singaporean sense of time, Australia initially seemed too relaxed. It also took me several months to fully understand the Aussie English language. Memorable is the warmth and solidarity of most people, a majority of them immigrants. In Australia I learned to enjoy the outdoors differently, to savour a »barbie« or »brekkie« (Australian abbreviations for barbecue and breakfast, respectively) with friends, and to take delight in the lush nature reserve behind our house populated by kangaroos, lorikeets, and kookaburras. After slowly falling in love with this beautiful country, I proudly became an Australian citizen. In Australia



Carlos and one of his projects in a promotional photo for the DIDI + Vitra chair exhibition for Dubai Design Week 2018. Photograph by S. Tinari

I met wonderful people like Lisa, with whom I have worked for many years and become friends. There, too, I met Regine, Catherine, Anka, and Tatiana when they first came to the Australian National University (ANU) to start the Cultural Spaces program. However, being the curious traveller that I am, and with the support of my family who also enjoy learning about different cultures, in 2018 I embarked on a new adventure and moved to the United Arab Emirates.

Since April 2018 I have been the first founding professor of the new Dubai Institute of Design and Innovation DIDI, established in collaboration with the MIT and the Parsons School of Design. We created a unique interdisciplinary Bachelor's in Design, where students graduate with two cross-concentrations from Product, Multimedia, Fashion, and Strategic Design Management. Through my interdisciplinary approach to design, as well as my cross-cultural understanding, I am directing the development of a new curriculum, mindful of local cultural elements within a global and technologically enhanced future.

Culture and cultural identity have been very influential for me, not only as an academic but also in my practice as a designer. As a design student in the 1990s, I took elements of Colombian pop culture and incorporated them into my designs. Afterwards, when I went to Japan, I wanted to absorb as much as possible of their culture, and so my designs became very minimalistic. However, through this process of acculturation I also realised that I was reflecting on my own identity as a Colombian and Latin American. As an example, while we were in Japan I designed with my wife, Andrea Garcia, a jewellery collection called *Uchivas* inspired by the physalis, a fruit from my country. The prototypes were fabricated by master artisans in my country, through traditional filigree techniques unique to the Mompo region.



»Uchuvas« jewellery collection. Photograph by C. Montana-Hoyos and A. Garcia, 2005



»A La Lata« furniture collection. Photograph by C. Montana-Hoyos, 2006

In the *A La Lata* collection, I was inspired by elements from traditional Latin American crafts, such as hammocks, as well as by contemporary urban crafts which use waste materials such as aluminium can tabs in new and creative ways as part of efforts in adaptive re-use and repurposing within the framework of design for sustainability. The project also incorporated classic western design elements, such as inspiration from the Bauhaus and bent-pipe techniques for the structure of the chair.

In terms of teaching and learning, the opportunity to live, study and teach in different countries has exposed me to different cultures and educational systems. From my personal experience, educational systems in Colombia, Japan, Singapore, Australia, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates all share similar values, yet all have many differences. Given my research in the field of culture and design, I also integrated the idea of cultural identity into my teaching in Singapore and, after 2016, in Australia. I proposed to third-year students a design brief for a studio where they were tasked with designing small pieces of furniture that would convey the idea of being Australian.

I believe we should not be afraid of introducing culturally rich elements into design, as long as we do it with prior understanding and respect. Ideas such as »eclecticism«, the combination of a variety of influences, and »fusion«, joining two or more things together, are valid ways to enhance creativity. As designers, we should be able to experiment, make mistakes and continue evolving. Excellent examples of cultural elements in design were discussed during my visit to Basel, as exemplified by the image below.

Today we know where we are born, but we never know where we are going to live. This possibility of travelling opens a world of cross-cultural experiences. While

sometimes difficult due to culture shocks, language barriers or living far from family and friends, travel and new cultures open a world of new experiences and opportunities, sometimes beyond your comfort zones. Travel has taught me to be respectful towards different people and cultures, and this is especially valuable for a design educator. My own experiences make me empathetic with students from different cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, as designers, we frequently need to be flexible and adaptable, and this is fostered by inter- and multidisciplinary. Globalisation simply happens, it is inevitable and we need to embrace it.

*Lisa:* I grew up in a small town in the USA just outside Albany, the capital of New York State. When I was ten years old, my mother took my brother, grandmother and me on a trip to Europe to visit my aunt and uncle, who were living and working in Paris. We also used this as an opportunity to visit and reconnect with my grandmother's extended family in the Black Forest, Germany (my grandmother was born in Germany and migrated to the USA when she was eight years old). It was my first time on an airplane and also my first time being immersed in a culture outside of my own. Ultimately, this journey sparked a love for travel and exploration that has shaped my professional and personal life. Although I applied to study overseas, the cost was prohibitive, and so I settled on a small liberal arts college in Florida that had a well-rounded program in humanities. I remained an undeclared major throughout



»Bushranger« furniture collection inspired by Australian art and indigenous woods. Designed by student Millie Menzies, who attended the Basel symposium. Photograph by C. Montana-Hoyos



»German dreidel with African motifs« an example of eclecticism and fusion in design, found in an exhibition in Basel visited in the course of the 2017 Cultural Spaces and Design symposium. Photograph by C. Montana-Hoyos, 2017



my first year and took a range of French language, arts, and music classes before finally settling on a Graphic Design major in my second year. In the summer before my final year of University, I applied to be an au pair for a family in Rouen, France and spent the summer on an amazing adventure looking after a lovely little boy and exploring France as a member of a French family. The experience as an au pair and travelling alone through Europe at nineteen years old, was life-changing and gave me the confidence to fulfill my ambition to move overseas permanently.

On completion of my undergraduate studies, I undertook a Master's of Design Studies program at Central St. Martins, University of the Arts London. At twenty-one years of age, and not knowing a soul in London, I excitedly packed my bags and set out on a new adventure exploring the UK. London was a revelation, and it was here that I developed a deeper appreciation for design in all its forms. My classmates, hailing from all over Europe, the Middle East and Asia, brought with them interesting new cultural perspectives on design and we formed new interdisciplinary and cross-cultural approaches in our joint projects and collaborations. Post MA, I was offered a role as a design consultant with an American interior design company and spent a further year in London providing design solutions and managing a team of designers before my wanderlust kicked in again.

In 2003 I was offered a role teaching Visual Communications and Multimedia at Raffles Design Institute in Shanghai. Living in China was a challenge – I had to create a new life from scratch in a place that was completely foreign to anything I had previously experienced. But I stuck it out; learned survival Mandarin, memorized the metro map, found a great group of colleagues and friends. And I fell in love – first with working in higher education, and then with a smart and hilarious Aussie who had mastered enough Chinese characters to find the ingredients to make me an authentic New York chili dog. By trusting in myself, my colleagues, my students and sometimes in random strangers, I had had opened the door to a completely new, unexpected and better reality than I had ever imagined for myself.

Pursuing a career path in higher education meant further study, and so I decided to give my new relationship with my Australian partner a go and applied to study for a PhD at Griffith University in Brisbane. After living for several years in China, Australia was very easy to assimilate into, and I immediately felt at home there. A mix of Asian cultural influences with a Western heritage, Australia seemed a natural progression in my journey. In Brisbane, I completed my PhD in Western fashion advertising and its effect on the cultural perceptions of youth in mainland urban China. On completion of my PhD I was offered the role of programme director of Graphic Design at Deakin University in Melbourne. My (now) husband and I moved across the country to start a new life in Australia's second largest city. In Melbourne, I made many connections with designers and set up new international initiatives for our rural campuses that involved working with colleagues from Norges Kreative Fagskole in Norway to create a joint design brief and travelling to Oslo to deliver this

programme. I also travelled to India to explore study tour pathways for Australian students. This work greatly helped to inform my understanding of best practice in study tours.

In 2010 I was offered an assistant professor role at the University of Canberra. Although Canberra is the federal capital of Australia, it has the feel and population of a regional city, and many of our students had limited experience in travelling outside the region. To address this, I set up the first faculty-led study tour programme at the University in 2012 and brought twelve graphic-design students to Shanghai – the journey was funded by the government's *Asia Bound* scholarship. The tour, which I named *Inspired by Shanghai*, later came to be developed as a signature programme for the Faculty of Arts and Design and the greater University, winning numerous university and national teaching awards. In the third year of the programme, I opened it up to students in industrial design and was able to work with Carlos in establishing tours to Japan and Singapore. The tours that Carlos and I developed from 2013 onwards showcase our ability to bring students from a range of practices and cultures together to work in cross-cultural and interdisciplinary teams and create design solutions to local and global issues.

In July of 2019, I was offered the role of professor and head of school – School of Design at the Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane. Returning to my husband's, and what I now consider as my own, Australian hometown seemed a natural progression in our lives. It not only offered me an exciting opportunity to shape and lead the direction of an established design school but also to be closer to relatives so that my son (now six) could form a deeper relationship with his extended family. The QUT Design Lab has a focus on »Change by Design«, and this focus on social design fits with my practice and value set. This year we achieved our goal to become the top design school in the Excellence in Research Australia ranking in the area of »Design Practice Management«, and we will continue to build on this success.

Travel has led me to understand that to realise my full potential I needed to go as far outside my comfort zone as I possibly could. Living in a country vastly different from my own was for me the only way to truly understand myself. Viewing your own culture from an external perspective gives one powerful insight. As a leader, I aim always to be self-reflective, humble and empathic. The many experiences of living and working overseas have led me to understand people more deeply, and this is essential in my current role. I have learned to be patient and empathic in situations that are sometimes difficult or impossible to control. I am eternally grateful to have had the range of experiences discussed in this chapter. Through them, I have learned that it is important to continually question what you are doing and how it impacts on the world.



## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### CULTURE, CROSS-CULTURALITY, INTERDISCIPLINARITY AND GLOBALISATION IN DESIGN EDUCATION

This section summarizes the theory, literature reviews, and traditional academic research on the topics discussed in order to ground our personal experiences, experiments and reflections. The relationships between culture, education, and design are very varied and multi-layered, with each being simultaneously influenced by and exerting an influence on each other. Culture can be defined as

*[...] an anthropological term referring to the fundamental values, beliefs, and codes of practice that make a community what it is. The customs of a society, the self-image of its members, and the things that show it as different from other societies constitute its culture. (Fincham, Robin; Rhodes, Peter 1994, as cited by Razzaghi and Ramirez 2009)*

With regard to education, it is important to have in mind that culture is learned; it is not inherent to us. In those terms, *»the process of education is a process of acculturation«*. As such, *»teaching and learning are not only embedded in culture; they are cultural transmission in action, the means to culture«*. (Parrish, Patrick; Linder-VanBerschot, Jennifer A. 2010: 5)

Within an anthropological perspective, we understand a culture by studying the objects and artefacts made and used by a group of people. As artefacts help us to understand and study culture, design is then an active creator and communicator of culture and meaning. In our contemporary world, we can classify different layers of culture as they relate to design. We have what we call our visual culture (all that can be perceived through the eyes), we have our material culture (all that is made with physical materials), and we even have our new digital culture (all that is made with data). As designers, we use and create visual, material, and digital cultures, which provide the articulation of the continuous transformation of meaning in our current society. Designers are simultaneously consumers and producers of culture. As stated by Lee:

*Regardless of whether designers consciously intended to create a cultural object or not, all the artefacts they designed will eventually be those which reflect the culture at that time. (Lee, K. P. 2016)*

Within design education, and especially in industrial and product design, many studies discuss cultural aspects of design, such as cultural affordance of products (Razzaghi, Mohammed; Ramirez, Mariano 2009), culturally oriented product design and the impact of cultural aspects on the design process, among others. In their study, Razzaghi and Ramirez (2009) found that a majority of design courses suffer from a lack of subjects related to the links between design and culture. Furthermore, Norman (2012) suggests that globalisation has caused a homogenisation and lack of diversity in design and design curricula around the world.

Study trips and travel are a great way to enhance Cultural Intelligence, or CQ, which encompasses the attributes that allow individuals to be effective in cross-cultural interactions. (Thomas, David C. et al. 2008: 123-43) CQ is defined as *»a person's capability for successful adaptation to new cultural settings, that is, for unfamiliar settings attributable to cultural context«*. (Earley, P. Christopher; Ang, Soon 2003: 4) Research demonstrates that one way to improve CQ is through travel, both for work and for pleasure, in a culture significantly different from one's own. (Takeuchi, Riki et al. 2005: 85-100) Although it can be argued that CQ skills develop through a longer period of travel and/or interaction with a cultural group significantly different from one's own, research by Engle and Crowne (Engle, Robert; Crowne, Kerri 2014: 30-46) as well as our own research, shows that short-term international travel may also have a significant impact on the development of CQ in students. Cross-cultural interactions and exchanges are a way to transfer knowledge and educate others on the meanings of images, symbols, and behaviours. Cross-cultural design is the outcome of the transfer of knowledge that occurs when different cultures come together to design solutions to complex global problems. Multidisciplinary and cross-cultural interaction are defining features of current art and design education and practice in a globalised world.

### ENHANCING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND CULTURAL AWARENESS THROUGH STUDY TOURS

Travel and education are interrelated and comparable, as both are described as journeys. A journey is defined as *»something suggesting travel or passage from one place to another«*. (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2016) Travel can be understood as a physical journey, moving from one place to another, while education can be understood as a mental journey, a passage from one state of mind to another, or a process of exploration and acculturation. Within this context, travel is often associated with education, acculturation, and transformation.

We wanted to bring to our teaching practice elements of the vast experiential knowledge we had gained from our own experiences with travel. Therefore, in 2012 we established a series of study tours to allow our students to travel and learn about the world and different cultures. In planning such tours, it is desirable that the destinations are culturally diverse and different from the home country, to provide students with a more culturally diverse experience. As an educational method, study tours are very different from other types of tertiary teaching models. Rather than just being in class, study tours are immersive and multisensory. While traditional education is mainly audio-visual, during a study trip we also experience the food, the smells, and the tastes. These are sensory experiences that are usually not present in a traditional educational setting. Study trips also require students to interpret phenomena that are not always specified in a structured curriculum. What is learned on a study trip derives from real life and interaction with diverse people. Given globalisation and the possible globalised practices of the student designers we are training for the future, international exchange and cultural immersion are key for all students in

the 21st century. Research by others, as well as our research and experience, have shown that graduates who have studied abroad, even for a short period, are more culturally adaptable, more aware, and able to work more effectively in multicultural environments. Below we outline the programme of tours that we facilitated and led from 2012–2018. The tours show a range of teaching practices and cultural immersion through creative briefs.

#### **CASE STUDY: INSPIRED BY SINGAPORE - 2014/2016 (MULTICULTURAL)**

— In 2014, we established our first multidisciplinary tour which included students from industrial design, graphic design, and media arts. During this sixteen-day



**Walking around Singapore with students.**  
Photograph by the authors, 2014/16



**Small product and package designs by Australian students, inspired by Singaporean culture and sold in a market during the University of Canberra Open Day.** Photograph by the authors

tour, students were provided with an understanding of the contemporary design culture, retail graphics, signage and visual language of Singapore. Through a daily blog, students researched retail design and signage in Singapore to create products, promotional items, and signage. On the second week of the tour, UC students worked with local students to get insight into and inspiration from Singaporean culture and aesthetics. Students also met with designers, architects and product designers in Singapore throughout the trip to get an overall idea of the importance of design in the country. Through visits to markets, museums, galleries, temples, design studios and other places of interest in Singapore students gained local insights into the Singaporean aesthetic. On the final day, students presented their concepts and prototypes to local design professionals, students and tutors for critique. Students then returned to Canberra to realise their concepts back on the home campus. The unit culminated in a student-led design market at the University of Canberra open day. A post-tour survey revealed that the firsthand experience of and insight into different cultures, customs and beliefs are of great importance and that those experiences helped students to understand their own Australian culture better. The comment below highlights the idea of coming out of your comfort zone and how you can see further once you do so.

*At home you can get bogged down in the need to just get the work done, and outside factors like paid work and social life can distract you from seeing inspiration opportunities around you, but on the trip to Singapore I was taken out of my comfort zone and given a chance to see all types of design in another country. The whole trip rejuvenated my love for design, and I have a ton of new ideas for future work.*  
(Study Abroad Student Survey, 2014)

This tour was a great combination of skill sets, and we found that students were able to not only absorb the culture but also to adapt to a new learning culture from a discipline outside their own. Students from graphic design, for instance, had limited experience working in 3D, and therefore it was a steep learning curve to understand scale and materiality in their product and exhibition design. As well, industrial design students had limited knowledge of typography, logos, and graphic design practice. This experience allowed students to learn from each other and to work outside their ›comfort zone‹. By the end of this study tour, graphic design students who had never previously stepped foot in the industrial design workshop became regular visitors and used the practices they learned on the tour to inform their final exhibition and folio work later that year. Many industrial designers honed their visual design and branding skills and knowledge as well.

**CASE STUDY: INSPIRED BY JAPAN- 2015 (MONOCULTURAL)** — Singapore is what we would call a multicultural place, but in contrast Japan is somewhat monocultural – and that is a description the Japanese people would use about themselves. While relatively similar to the Singapore experience and project briefs, this experience was very interesting again as the language barriers added another layer of complexity,



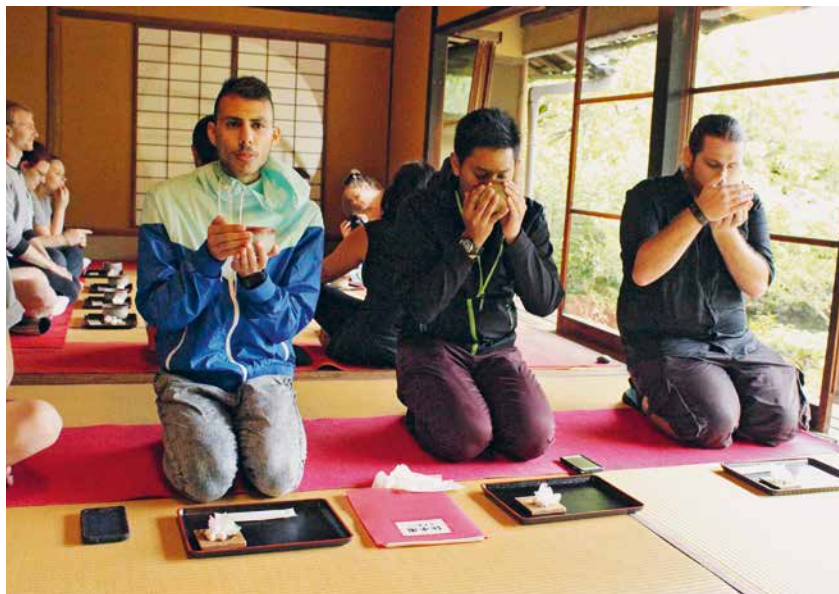
contributing to the learning outcome for the Australian students. Students reflected that the language barrier enabled them to form stronger visual communication skills. The comment below shows how much students gained from the ability to work across diverse linguistic and cultural boundaries.

*The faculty-led programmes are the ideal blend of study and travel. You, along with a wonderful group of students and teachers, are immersed fully into a new, exciting culture. The trip exceeded all of my expectations across the board, and I felt inspired, refreshed and ready to take on new challenges. It was just what I needed to diversify my university experience and my personal growth as well. I can now say I have a new group of friends here at Canberra University AND on the other side of the world. My horizons have been broadened, and I couldn't be more grateful for this opportunity.*

(Study Abroad Student Survey, 2015)

#### **CASE STUDY: INSPIRED BY SINGAPORE + 2017/2018 (SOCIAL DESIGN)**

We decided to shift gears with the tour, introducing a social design brief and expanding it to a more multidisciplinary approach and to more regions and cultures. In 2017, we opened the tour up to nursing students. Thirty students from four Australian states (Victoria, Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, and Queensland) travelled to Singapore to work with forty-seven Singaporean and Hong Kong students from the areas of public health, nursing, built environment, visual communications and product design. Prior to the study trip, students did some secondary research and literature reviews as well as an extensive research report, to later explore the concept of »design for healthy ageing in multicultural societies«



**Australian students participating in a traditional Japanese tea ceremony. 2015 study tour.** Photograph by the authors, 2015



**Example of final projects by Australian students, inspired by Japanese culture. 2015 study tour.** Photograph by the authors, 2015



**Example of final projects by Australian students, inspired by Japanese culture. 2015 study tour.** Photograph by the authors, 2015



through site visits, lectures, and intensive workshops. They then designed strategies and prototypes for new technologies and approaches around key issues such as social isolation, dealing with new technologies, dementia care, mobility issues, residential care, and community engagement. The project was expanded in 2018 to include aspects of user-centred design, empathy, and cross-cultural as well as multidisciplinary co-design. Students visited care homes and hospitals across the island and created new design solutions based on interviews with residents and patients in the facilities that they came in contact with. The outcomes from both tours were displayed at the National Design Centre in Singapore and received very favourable reviews from the design community as well as from care homes and health professionals.

The *Inspired by Singapore: Design for Healthy Ageing* tours allowed students to get a perspective on a topic of global relevance and relate it to their own culture. Many of the design solutions that were created had universal value and addressed issues that crossed cultural barriers. Although the tours attracted a few mature students (in their mid-late thirties and even mid-fifties) the majority of the students were in the age range of nineteen to twenty-five. Ageing is very far from their minds as they are exploring their career pathways and thinking about setting up their post-university lives. This brief put them in a new headspace. Through a variety of empathy activities, as well as direct contact with residents in aged care facilities, students had to step into the shoes of the user, and this proved to be a moving experience for all involved. It was also a further challenge for students to work across the vastly different discipline areas of design and nursing. Challenging students to learn a new disciplinary culture and language enabled design students to understand the needs of patients from the perspective of health practitioners and conversely created a sense of confidence in the nursing students that they had the capacity to identify design needs and influence design processes. Student comments below reflect the benefits of opening these tours to a range of practices and of getting students to co-design directly with residents in care facilities:

*I truly appreciate the opportunity to see life from another view and to explore a country so rich with culture. (Study Abroad Student Survey, 2017)*

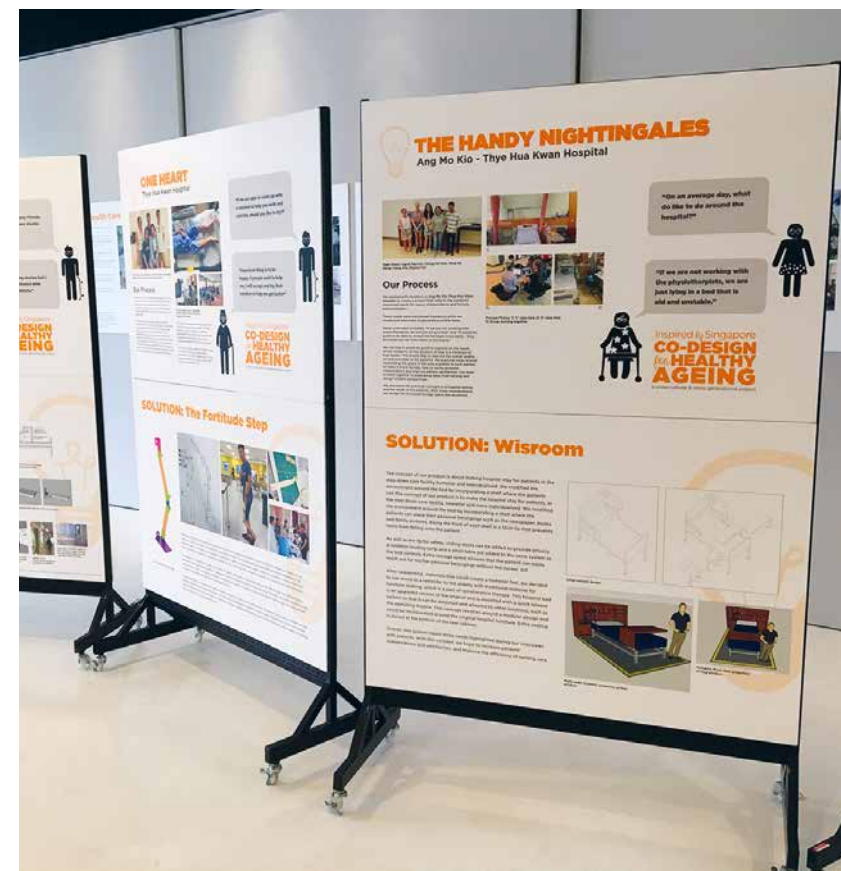
*I now have a clearer understanding of what it is to be Singaporean. It's made up of so many different people with different backgrounds and different experiences. So much so that it's impossible not to learn about them and from them. (Study Abroad Student Survey, 2017)*

## CONCLUSIONS

From our personal experiences, we have come to realise that cultural exchange opens a person's vision of the world to new cultures and different ways of thinking and doing. It also helps individuals seek a better understanding of their cultural background. Language barriers force design students to rely on their observational skills rather than on verbal skills, and they are then compelled to use their design



Australian and Asian students during empathy activities to understand life with disabilities due to ageing, as part of the 2017/2018 Singapore study tours. Photograph by the authors



Exhibition of student projects in the National Design Centre, as part of the 2017/2018 Singapore study tours. Photograph by the authors

communication skills. Study tours offer opportunities for linking educational experience with research, be it practice-led or concerned with the theory of teaching and learning. This experiential learning is especially important in creative disciplines such as design, where a better understanding of different cultures also means a better understanding of different people, and this knowledge is vital for user-centred and culturally sensitive design. Cultural aspects are very important at all stages of global projects (negotiation, discussion, implementation). It is incredibly important to jointly establish a common language (as meanings vary according to different languages, cultures, and disciplines). For a designer speaking to an artist, an engineer, or a nurse a word can have very different meanings depending on the discipline and culture. We believe that the way forward in solving some of the world's most pressing and complex design problems is through cross-cultural and interdisciplinary collaboration. In our new roles developing and leading curricula in design schools in Australia and Dubai, it is therefore our greatest hope to continue to bring diverse groups of people together, and to challenge them with design briefs that bring greater awareness and understanding of other cultures and most importantly, of their own culture.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A big Thank You to all our former students, colleagues and collaborators, and to the amazing people involved in the *Cultural Spaces and Design. Prospects of Design Education* project, with whom we have shared the joy of learning through fun travel and academic experiences with a beautiful human touch.

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# INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOPS CULTURAL SPACES AND DESIGN

## PRELIMINARY REMARKS

The three workshops presented in this survey were parts of the research project *Cultural Spaces and Design*. They took place in Banasthali (India), Gaborone (Botswana), and Canberra (Australia) in 2016 and lasted one week each. They were attended by students of the hosting universities as well as by students of the Institute HyperWerk, Academy of Art and Design at the University of Applied Sciences in Basel, Switzerland. The group of Swiss students was always a different one – only very few students participated in two or in all three workshops.

For the implementation of these workshops the following key aspects were formulated in order not to reduce the culturally diverse conditions in the various countries to a single focus and, in so doing, to narrow the view for each of the specific situations:

- Material orientations: Banasthali (India), focus on *Crafts and Design Cultures*
- Problem orientations: Gaborone (Botswana), focus on *Water*
- Discourse orientations: Canberra (Australia), focus on *Points of View – Connotations in Material Cultures*

Only certain aspects were selected from the extensive material, primarily in order to characterise the workshops. Detailed accounts of all aspects are not possible here.



# CRAFTS AND DESIGN CULTURES

## BANASTHALI, INDIA

### ANKA FALK, TATIANA TAVARES

The *Crafts and Design Cultures* workshop was held near Jaipur, Rajasthan. It was conducted in cooperation with the design department of the most important women's university in India, Banasthali University. The participating students included 18 female Bachelor students, among them six students from HyperWerk, most of them in their final year of Bachelor studies.

The concept, planning, and supervision were conducted by Anka Falk, working with the workshop directors Professor Himadri Ghosh and Tatiana Tavares, and workshop assistant Eliane Gerber.<sup>1</sup> Organisers and co-directors were Professor Joshi and Professor Hamsavahini Singh. All hands-on courses were conducted by members of the faculty, assistants and craft experts.

### THE WORKSHOP

The workshop connected students and lecturers with the purpose of creating a platform for exploring hands-on Indian crafts, followed by daily afternoon discussions. The workshop was embedded in the framework of the »hands-on week« taking place every year in Banasthali. Teams of Indian and Swiss students formed central basic structures during the workshop sessions and leisure time activities to promote a close personal contact between students. The individual or group work carried out in each of these courses was geared towards producing concrete final crafted products, which were later displayed in an exhibition. The Swiss students also visited the Kadhi Center based on the campus, in which threads and fabrics are produced from cotton and sewn together in the tradition of Gandhi, performed by women who live in the villages surrounding the campus.<sup>2</sup> Before the workshop, the students from HyperWerk spent two days in Jaipur, visiting the city and the village of Bagru (a village well-known for its rich tradition of textile and wood block printing), in order to become accustomed to the new environment and craft techniques.

On the basis of the summaries the students had produced beforehand, which included a dossier about a local craft of their own culture and individual research interests, students were allocated to the different courses offered during the workshop week among the 17 courses available. These were:

- *Healthy Food Cooking*. Outline of traditional Indian cuisine from different regions in India.
- *Craft Furniture*. Production of simple wicker seating furniture and couches.
- *Space Design*. Usage scenarios for a courtyard of the campus, later presented in a model.
- *Metal-Based Tabletop Accessory*. Designing and realising table accessories, such as placemats.
- *Dance Costumes – Rajasthani Garments*. Designing and realising models of dance costumes on the basis of traditional Indian dance costumes.
- *Wearable Accessories*. Production of jewellery and accessories from waste fabric.

### METHODS

A series of methods were used during the workshop as means to create a dialogue between the practical and the cultural experience. A process of immersion through making, first-hand observation, a series of group discussions, coaching sessions, and an assignment (described in the Tour Study guide) provided for the students were the main strategies used.



Exploring the campus. Photograph by A. Stauffer, 2016

## IMMERSION THROUGH MAKING

The workshop was characterised by immersion, acquisition of crafts, and first-hand observation. The setting invited students to experience Indian craft and culture by working with materials, following one another through practical activities and cultural exchange.

## FIRST-HAND OBSERVATION

Students were encouraged to take notes and discuss their observations, even if they might reveal stereotypes or judgements. This allowed an open dialogue about design cultures and culture-bound perspectives. These observations were the basis for group discussions and coaching sessions.

## GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND COACHING

Students were presented with specific issues and design- and/or culture-related questions which they discussed with lecturers during and after the activities. In group discussions students talked about their specific interests, research foci and experiences from the workshop. Discussions ranged from a general exchange about the notions of culture, cultural rootedness and affiliation to feedback given by each student about their experience and aspects of the »foreign« while being with their teams. Coaching was applied to support students in linking their experiences to their own research interests (especially those who were working on diploma projects).

## THE ASSIGNMENT

A Tour Study Guide described the assignment students would need to fulfill after taking part in the workshop and after reflecting their experience. The task included keeping a journal during the stay in India (according to the Travel Kit) and to transform their observations and reflections into an artefact after their return. The aim of the documentation was to reflect the workshop using designing methods rather than analysing it from a critical distance.<sup>3</sup>

## SUMMARY AND CRITICAL REMARKS

**ASSIGNED ROLES AND HIERARCHY** — Assigned roles, hierarchy and mutual exotisation were clearly part of the workshop experience. Some students pointed out the importance of hierarchy in Banasthali and Indian culture in general, where instructors are accorded authority and their judgement is rarely put into question by students. Another aspect affecting the interaction between the instructors and the students was the way the Indian hosts understood the roles of hosts and guests: Indian hospitality provides for treating guests in a manner as courteous as possible so that they do not have to think and make more choices than is absolutely necessary. It must be considered that culture-immanent concepts such as politeness and respect may have complicated or limited the exchange.



**Metal-Based Tabletop Accessory workshop.** Photograph by I. Baumgartner, 2016



**Block printing workshop.** Photograph by N. Fankhauser, 2016

## AFTERNOON DISCUSSION SESSIONS

In addition to the time dedicated to the individual crafts during the courses, group sessions in the late afternoon gave the students the opportunity to exchange their experiences. The exchange taking place during these times was not limited to the topic of the workshop itself but turned out to be an important »vessel« for facilitating communal exchange between the participants. It must be considered valuable, not least due to the feedback given by the students, that the sessions facilitated an open





Space design workshop. Photograph by A. Stauffer, 2016



Afternoon discussion sessions. Photograph by A. Stauffer, 2016

exchange about assumptions held about »the others«, about values and conventional norms inherent in one's own and the others' culture as well as in the corresponding design cultures. In general, students reported that when they were engaged in an exchange about differences, limits were negotiated so that a certain degree of social cohesion could arise.

### EXPERIENCING CRAFTS AS DESIGN CULTURES

The topic of crafts – and especially crafts in India – has considerably greater potential than could possibly be exploited within the framework of this workshop. Indian

Crafts evoke great fascination and a sense of longing in the Western visitor. The projections on Indian crafts are marked by a certain romanticism caused by the materiality, the relation to time and space (slow-motion, rootedness in a locality, originality and uniqueness of product, emotional factors). For Indians, crafts are a crucial part of their culture, which is severely challenged by globalization, changes in the Indian society and its consequences. They are a unique and rich resource and expression of cultural identity and thus part of the manifold design cultures in India.

The complex relationship of crafts, social systems, and cultural identity would offer a lot for deeper exploration and encounter. Yet, the workshop confronted students with severe cultural differences in design understanding and beyond, which enabled especially the Swiss students who were exposed to the different cultural space to reflect their own culture-bound perspective. They realized e.g. the relevance of emotional approaches, of myth and tradition in Indian design understanding, and the reassuring strength of one's cultural identity by certain aesthetics (symbols, ornaments, colors).

Any culture is a complex web which requires a deeper sense of immersion and time. We are well aware that we were only able to scratch the surface. Nonetheless, this experience promoted a setting for questions to emerge and opened up ways of negotiating relationships, designerly ways of knowing, and cultural interactions. Further workshops conducted in the follow-up phase were dedicated to the exchange of experiences within the group. These workshops proved to be both useful and desired by the students and went beyond the individual reflections to be undertaken by them in their documentation assignments. When the students were discussing experiences, it was possible to name mutual projections and realize our need to create narratives out of observations while seeking for sense and meaningfulness in a foreign cultural context. To be aware of this is a starting point.

### NOTES

1. While the workshops were taking place in Banasthali, Anka Falk studied forms of and opportunities for coaching and supervision over spatial distances. The results of this study are presented later in this volume.
2. It was not only due to the fact that the workshop topic was geared towards practical design activities but also because arguably, in a first-time contact, Indian culture can have an overwhelming and a highly engaging effect, thus making it difficult to take a distant analytical stance of observation.
3. These workshops are part of the social commitment in favour of the needy undertaken by Banasthali University.
4. The following article by Himadri Ghosh *Educating an Awareness of the Impact of Indian Lifestyles on Craft Traditions* gives a glimpse of this. Primarily, it shows the connection between calligraphy and various materials.



# EDUCATING AN AWARENESS OF THE IMPACT OF INDIAN LIFESTYLES ON CRAFT TRADITIONS

## HIMADRI HIREN GHOSH

The cultural spaces of any country contain cultural elements. And cultural elements depend primarily upon the lifestyle of the inhabitants living in that particular space. Differences in lifestyle may be due to climate, locale, environment, occupation, and need as well as traditions, myths, and stories etc.

It is very difficult to define Indian culture. Indian lifestyles change almost from one village to the next, and changes in lifestyle also mean changes in traditional values.

65% of Indians live in villages. And we are talking about rural India, not urban India which has its own culture and is pseudo-Western.

Even today many villages have a mason, metalsmith, jeweller, a weaver community and potters etc. who cater to the needs of nearby villages and are mostly paid through a barter system.

Indian cultural spaces are very diverse in nature and contain many subcultural spaces because traditions vary from caste to caste. To understand caste, one has to understand how traditional culture in India came into being.

In India approximately 5000 years ago, nobody wrote. Everybody used oral communication, and norms were communicated in oral forms called »*Shruti*«. The canons of law were oral only. Much later, people started writing in Tamra Patra.

India is a place where foreign cultures are not rejected but are absorbed and moderated. Our culture therefore became richer through inputs from these different external forces. In the beginning, Aryans and Huns came from Central Asia and China, respectively, and after them came the Mughals. They, of course, were followed by the Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch and British. All of them added something to our Indian culture which, in consequence, is so diverse and has links to somewhere to something or other in every part of the country. The diversity of Indian culture is so great that approximately every 20 miles one finds differences in all elements of culture and tradition.



**Dhokra Craft Sculpture in Devanagari – Odisha Contemporary Adaptation of Traditional Craft.** Creator: Subhash Arora. Metalworkers from Odisha created a statuette in the dhokra or lost-wax method of metal casting, common to Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal. This craftwork was made to highlight the importance of gender empowerment through literacy and education. The image formed by a creative mind and hand was of an Adivasi woman, fully adorned with traditional ornamentation, confidently working at a computer, complete with peripherals such as a mouse and keyboard in Devanagari letters. Courtesy of the author.





**Woven Brocade Stoles – Uttar Pradesh.** Creator: Maqbool Hassan. In the same stole one motif form originates from Urdu calligraphy whereas the other uses Devanagri.<sup>1</sup> Courtesy of the author



**Woven Brocade Saree in Devanagri – Uttar Pradesh.**<sup>2</sup> Creator: Munna Pahalwan. Courtesy of the author



**Hand Block Printed Saree in Malayalam.**<sup>3</sup> Creator: Gopal Lal Barad and Arshad Kafeel. Courtesy of the author



**Handloom-Woven Assamese Gamucha-Assam.** Creator: Anuradha-Kuli Tegu. This gamucha or multi-functional towel was woven in cotton in Bengali script (Assamese language). The graceful tradition of honouring a guest with a handwoven scarf sustains the skill of handloom weaving and helps it to retain its relevance. Courtesy of the author



**Hand Block Printed Saree in Kannada.**<sup>4</sup> Creator: Santosh Kumar Dhanopia. Courtesy of the author



**Ikat Woven Stoles in Telugu – Andhra Pradesh.**<sup>5</sup> Creator: Gajam Govardhana. Courtesy of the author.



When we talk about craft and its relationship with culture, then we need to examine culture's relationship with lifestyle and where crafts fit in.

India has a hot climate, the only change being the monsoon season. Rain falls in different months in different parts of India, and that determines the crops and the available leisure time. The normal farmer's day begins at half past four in the morning when he sets out to his farm. Because of the heat he comes back by nine o'clock and has his breakfast. From nine o'clock to five or six o'clock in the evening he is at home. That's when he and his family and the neighbourhood work together as a family to produce crafts.

So, craft has always been a communal activity and not an individual activity: people sing, sit, gossip and work together. This contrasts with situations where one particular factor is a little different than others: where craft is an art, the fine art of a single person. My claim is, therefore, that the relationship to craft is different depending on whether it is an individual or a team who is working. This relationship still exists to certain extent.

India is a vast country with 18 major and 1600 minor languages. There are 6 major religions and 6 major ethnic groups, 52 major tribes, and 6400 castes and sub-castes. It is difficult to imagine just how many cultures there are. The calendar has 29 major festivals in a country of over 1.2 billion people, with 65% of them in rural areas. When we think of India we think of the cities, where westernised culture has taken root. Such is not the case in the villages as the majority of Indians live in rural areas.<sup>6</sup>

In rural India people look up to nature as their teacher and follow a lifestyle which is healthy and sustainable. There, they still retain the spirit of true humanity.

One must also understand that this particular India is full of deserts, mountains, rivers and different climates. Whatever type of climate or weather one can think of, India is bound to have it. It might be 49 degrees Celsius in the shade somewhere but at the same time it will be minus 10 degrees somewhere else.

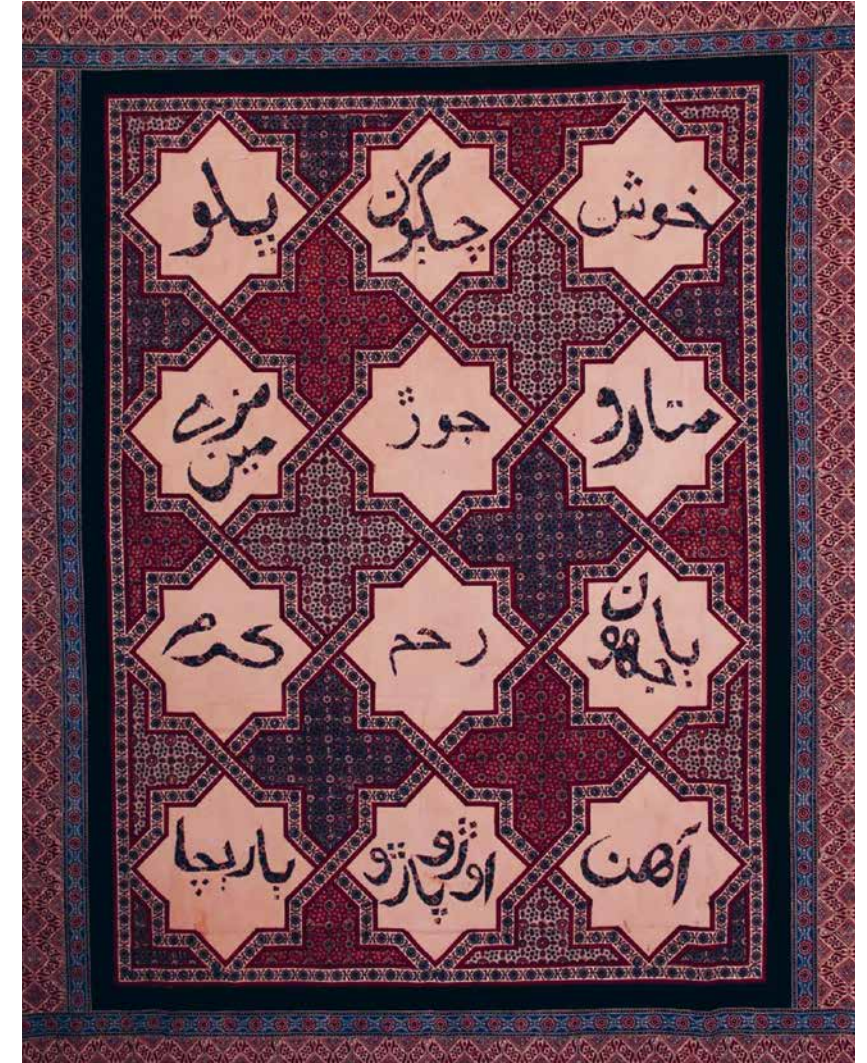
We cannot therefore talk about India as if it were one culture: it has multiple cultures joined together – it is unity in diversity where all cultures have learned to live together. This particular interaction between us is reflected as a cultural expression through craft.

The following images show the relationship between the properties of materials, their function and calligraphy, and calligraphy's value addition to the whole product.

I have divided this section into craft and calligraphy: calligraphy and textiles, calligraphy and home furnishing, calligraphy and metal, calligraphy and wood, and calligraphy and paper. In this way, one can see how the material has made a difference to calligraphy, or what difference calligraphy has made to the materials. Now you can see that, actually, there is a language inside. The illustrations show how that language has been integrated into the interaction of calligraphy and the materials. Through calligraphy, every product becomes rich in meaning and/or clearer in its meaning, e.g. the sarees get meaning for the weaver and the viewer. In the objects the form is important – but it gets very important and relevant due to the calligraphy.

The tides of time have not robbed the diverse and rich landscapes of India of their enchantment, nor the country's lifestyles of their beauty. The aesthetics of India, represented through its crafts and forms, its shapes and colour palates are almost like the cuisines of India which reflect a great range of diversity and tastes.

This kind of relationship pervades the entire Indian lifestyle and is the force which unites India despite its disparity.



**Ajrak Printed Coverlets in Sindhi-Gujarat.**<sup>7</sup> Creator: Khatri Mohd Razak. Gujarat state mostly used Urdu script for Urdu and Sindhi speakers and Gujarati script for the Gujarati speaking population. Razak-bhai created calligraphy using the stencil technique: words were drawn and cut out like stencils, to be placed on a solid colour base and printed with ajrak blocks so that just the words stood out in print. This created a bold, new, dramatic design and allowed Razak-bhai to use lettering without having to carve it in wood first. The process became simpler and more effective. Courtesy of the author





**Folios in Palm Leaf Manuscripts In Malayalam, 19th Century.** Many manuscripts were written on palm leaves, even after Indian languages were committed to paper in the 13th century.<sup>8</sup> Courtesy of the author



**Wood Carving in Devanagari-Harayana.** Creator: Mahavir Prasad Bondwal. The ear says that you need to pay careful attention to every sound. In a single wooden object, the maker of this rare piece has scripted the history of the wood he has used, his praise of the elephant as a great animal, and the importance of literacy. Courtesy of the author



**Copper Vessel. Islamic Calligraphy, Early 20th century, Kashmir.** Left: Handi – a cooking vessel for cooking rice and dal, outer top part in nickel and bottom part in copper with Islamic calligraphy. – Right: Lota vessel for storing or transporting food.<sup>9</sup> Courtesy of the author

## NOTES

1. The master weaver *naqaash* (pattern-maker) and a dozen others who worked on creating new calligraphy for the famed brocades of Varanasi were fascinated with the idea of making patterns out of words. They researched the 15th-century poet Kabir's works.

The motifs on the deep red silk stole are woven in the Devanagari script with zari thread. The large paisley figure at the two ends contains Kabir's poem:  
*Jab main tha tab hari nahin / ab hari hain main nahin / sab andhyara miti gaya / jab dipak dekhyo mahi.*

The single word *banaras*, also known historically as Kashi and Varanasi, became the smaller motif to be paired with the larger end motif of this stole.

The brilliant colour known among weavers as *rani pink* bears the Urdu script here. The design on the larger end motif is an interweaving of the words *kargha* (loom), *kapda* (cloth), *kaagaz* (paper), and *qalam* (pen) to form an elegant stylized bird. The interconnected words are obvious and become a leitmotif of Aksara on the subject of literacy: the pen and paper relate directly to the weaver's use of loom and cloth. The smaller matching motif, scattered on the body of the stole, is the word *resham* (silk).

2. In the north of India women always wore sarees either of cotton or silk. The Devanagari script reciting the *Saheb\** name becomes a small *butta* motif.  
\* *Saheb* is a word of Arabic origin meaning companion.
3. Malayalam is a major South Indian language. Another example of a script being used in the design of a saree.  
The finely woven cream-coloured cotton handloom sarees and unstitched two-piece dress sets called *mundu-veshti* with their coloured or golden borders are the hallmark of the refined dress sense of the people of Kerala. The body portion of the fabric is left plain. Cotton was exported to Egypt centuries ago – these trade relationships are believed to have influenced the choice of wearing white in Kerala as a customary practice, in the same way as it is worn by men in the Middle East.
4. Black on white and white on black prints have been used to signify white paper and black ink on two cotton sarees printed in Sanganer.  
The wood blocks were specially carved in different sizes for the Aksara project. The peepal leaf form is embellished with random letters in Kannada to form a textured pattern within it. The black and white replicates the ink of written or printed words on a white sheet of paper.
5. In South India a tie-dyed technique is used to convey greetings in Telugu script. Andhra Pradesh was and still is a major centre for cotton farming and processing as well as the manufacture of cotton fabrics and garments.  
Master-weaver Gajam Govardhana is an expert in the *ikat telia rumal* tradition of tie-dyed textiles. He highlights the rounded characters of the Telugu script to create dramatic contemporary designs for silk stoles.
6. These statistics are from the India census survey 2011. [Censusindia.gov.in](http://Censusindia.gov.in) Accessed on: September 23, 2019.
7. The coverlet has a cadence of questions and replies which are a part of customary practice in this community. A greeting is followed by a formalised response. It goes like this:  
*bhalo?* (Are you well?)  
*chango?* (How is your health?)  
*khush?* (Are you happy?)  
*majeme?* (Are you enjoying yourself?)  
*jode?* (How is everybody?)  
*mataro?* (Are you fit?)  
*karam?* (How is your work?)  
*raham?* (Mercy?)  
*baju?* (How are your neighbours?)  
*barbacha?* (How are your children?)  
*aadopado?* (How is your community?) and finally  
*ahen?* (All are well?)

This jousting with words in a singsong manner establishes a jovial mood when people greet each other.

8. Both sides of the leaves were used for writing. Long rectangular strips were gathered on top of one another, holes were drilled through all the leaves, and the book was held together by a string. The palm leaf was an excellent surface for writing with a brass stylus, making possible the delicate lettering used in many of the scripts of Southern Asia. Whether the script became angular (as in Devanagari, Bengali or Assamese) or rounded (as in Telugu, Malayalam or Kannada) depended on the original materials and instruments used by scribes and artisans in each region of India.
9. The *Lota* vessel is a very common object in the culture of Indian everyday life and, at the same time, a prominent object in modern Indian design history. In the 1950's industrial designers Charles and Ray Eames travelled for several months through India at the invitation of the Indian government in order to make recommendations on design education which might counter the rapid decline in the quality of consumer goods. Their investigations led to *The India Report* and, in 1961, to the founding of the National Institute of Design (NID).

The *Lota* vessel played a particular role in *The India Report*:

»Of all the objects we have seen and admired during our visit to India, the *Lota*, that simple vessel of everyday use, stands out as perhaps the greatest, the most beautiful. The village women have a process which, with the use of tamarind and ash, each day turns this brass into gold. But how would one go about designing a *Lota*? First one would have to shut out all preconceived ideas on the subject and then begin to consider factor after factor:

- The optimum amount of liquid to be fetched, carried, poured and stored in a prescribed set of circumstances.
- The size and strength and gender of the hands (if hands) that would manipulate it.
- The way it is to be transported – head, hip, hand, basket or cart.
- The balance, the centre of gravity, when empty, when full, its balance when rotated for pouring.
- The fluid dynamics of the problem not only when pouring but when filling and cleaning, and under the complicated motions of head carrying – slow and fast.
- Its sculpture as it fits the palm of the hand, the curve of the hip.
- Its sculpture as compliment to the rhythmic motion of walking or a static post at the well.
- The relation of opening to volume in terms of storage uses – and objects other than liquid.
- The size of the opening and inner contour in terms of cleaning.
- The texture inside and out in terms of cleaning and feeling.
- Heat transfer – can it be grasped if the liquid is hot?
- How pleasant does it feel, eyes closed, eyes open?
- How pleasant does it sound, when it strikes another vessel, is set down on ground or stone, empty or full – or being poured into?
- What is the possible material?
- What is its cost in terms of working?
- What is its cost in terms of ultimate service?
- What kind of an investment does the material provide as product, as salvage?
- How will the material affect the contents, etc., etc.?
- How will it look as the sun reflects off its surface?
- How does it feel to possess it, to sell it, to give it?»

In other words, for Charles and Ray Eames the *Lota* vessel was the manifestation of design criteria which were to be paradigmatic for design education in India. (Cf. Charles and Ray Eames, April 1958, *The India Report*. Designed & Printed at National Institute of Design, ©1997, 2nd Printing 2004, Ahmedabad, page 3 ff.)

The captions are drawn from Dastkari Haat Samiti and are slightly modified. Dastkari Haat Samiti is a not-for-profit organization in New Delhi, India, functioning according to democratic procedures and self-help.

# WATER

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# GABORONE, BOTSWANA

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## REGINE HALTER

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The project week *Water* was conducted at the University of Botswana (UB) in cooperation with the institute Industrial Design.

HyperWerk participated with seven students, one in the final Bachelor year and six who were completing their first Bachelor year. From Botswana, a total of 17 students of industrial design took part, all of whom were in their final Bachelor year. Other than in Switzerland, the Bachelor programme in Botswana takes five years to complete.

Concept, planning, supervision: Prof. Dr. Regine Halter (Project Director *Cultural Spaces*). Project Week Facilitator from Industrial Design UB Botswana: Prof. Dr. Richie Moalosi, Head of Department Industrial Design and Technology; Instructor Paulson Letsholo. Swiss Facilitators: Prof. Dr. Regine Halter; Andrea Iten MA.

At UB, the *Water* project week was offered as an extracurricular activity of one's own choice. Since the workshop week coincided with the UB Easter holidays, the UB students did not have to cancel any other obligations in order to attend the workshop; however, they forwent their holidays.

## CHOICE OF TOPIC

The topic of water had been chosen in previous talks between Professor Moalosi and me. This topic appeared to be especially suitable in the context of the *Cultural Spaces* research project for several reasons:

First, there is the relevance of the topic itself, since the effects of global warming are clearly perceivable especially in Botswana, a country in which water is a precious resource already, with three quarters of its territory being covered by the Kalahari Desert. This situation is aggravated by global warming: at the time the subtopics were selected, the Gaborone Dam which supplies the whole region with water had completely dried out, and water had to be delivered to Gaborone from a 400-kilometre distance through a pipeline. Moreover, the Okavango Delta had its lowest water level in years. Another reason for our choice was that Botswana had not sufficiently developed tools,

concepts, services etc. to recycle, purify, collect rainwater and use it efficiently etc., as Professor Moalosi told me in our preparational conversations.

Since HyperWerk students are not industrial designers, this topic provided them with the opportunity to actively share their ideas and make contributions to the topic during the project week. – In our preparatory talks, Richie Moalosi and I agreed not to discuss technology-centred approaches during that week, even though the research activities touched technical questions as well (such as recycling etc.).

## HOW THE SWISS STUDENTS PREPARED

Similar to the workshops in Banasthali and Canberra the preparational work took several months. The meetings for the *Water* project week focused on different levels of the topic of water and questions about Botswana on the one hand, and on the other on the students' and instructors' motivations and expectations about the local cultural situation there.

Questions tackled were e.g.: What is our understanding of water and how do we deal with it – as a resource, as a commodity, as a common good, as a human right? What local campaigns can be organised? What ›long-established‹ techniques of storing water are there in Switzerland or in the industrial countries of the West, and what techniques are there in Botswana or Africa, respectively? What ritual, philosophical, religious, mythological and artistic roles do cultural concepts play when we are dealing with water? Based on these concepts, how do different cultures and societies understand water? Which of these aspects are valid on a global scale, which are culture-specific? What project ideas and solution strategies exist already, and which of them can we take to Botswana? What do our Swiss glaciers have to do with Botswana? Etc.

As these questions show, scientific and ecological discussions on the element of water, aspects of its cultural significance as well as reflection on our own ambitions and expectations about the project week in Botswana were equally important here.

Based on the results of these meetings, the participating students revised their motivation papers and complemented them by a description of their own interests, skills, and previous research foci. These dossiers had been sent to Botswana in advance and served the purpose of helping our hosts – instructors and students – to get to know better the students from Switzerland.

At the very end of the preparational phase Swiss students were given topics to be considered in their self-documentation after they would have returned home from Botswana. These topics concerned

- Experiences, observations related to the collaboration between different design and communication cultures.
- Methodological differences – for example when making drafts or choosing materials and media (media also in the narrower or technical sense).
- Acquisition of competences in recognising problems and needs of other everyday life and consumer cultures.





Searching for water around Gaborone. Photograph by A. Iten, 2016

## PROJECT WEEK WATER

The working week was opened by lectures on the water situation in Botswana. Among the lecturers were Dr. Shorn Molokwane from the renowned *BITRI Design Institute* (Gaborone) who provided comprehensive information on the current water situation in Botswana, and Job Morris, the chief of the tribe of *San*, a tribe that had been oppressed for a long time and has meanwhile settled in the Kalahari area. He presented the topic of *San indigenous knowledge on water resources*, a lecture about the search for water and ways of storing it.

A presentation given by a group of project participants highlighted the understanding and use of water in Switzerland. Information on the research project *Cultural Spaces* had already been disseminated in the run-up to the project.

Subsequently, five working groups were formed according to the general sub-topics of *recycling, cleaning, harvesting, conservation*. The topics were further substantiated by each working group (see the representation of the group activities below). The way the working groups were composed had the quite welcome effect that, in each group, there were always more students from Botswana than from Switzerland. The group work was carried out inside as well as outside the university, whenever this was necessary. The instructors supervised the discussions and provided expertise. Moreover, an interim and a final presentation followed by discussions were held. – Throughout the working week, food and drinks were provided to the students inside the university, contributing a lot to the building of team spirit and increasing work intensity.

## WORKING GROUPS

In the course of the project week the following topics were developed and processed and, at the concluding event, presented to and discussed by numerous guests from the University of Botswana:

Group 1: *Preschool education on the topic of water*. – In this activity, the students developed media suitable for children in order to promote dealing with media use already from the age of four. The results were a comic book, stickers for bottles (showing a corresponding easy-to-understand message) and a main character (a frog). The group realised a first lesson in a preschool in Gaborone whereby it greatly benefited from the professional knowledge of one of the group members from Botswana. The main question to be tackled by the working group was how complex topics can be taught in a comprehensible and appealing way.

Group 2: *The weekly water report (Somarela Tho Thi – Every drop counts)*. – The group created a TV format similar to the weather report intended to be broadcast on Botswana TV at a fixed broadcast time. The programme is an entertainment format which, in addition to information on water and the current water situation, also transmits background information to promote an understanding of the importance of using water efficiently. – As a first activity, the group elaborated and presented a TV programme on water recycling and reprocessing. For this, apart from doing extensive research on water recycling/waste water treatment, the group conducted interviews with people on the campus and in the streets of Gaborone, in order to collect opinions on the use of reprocessed water. Furthermore, the group performed



Instructions for the first day of the project week »Water«. Photograph by A. Iten, 2016





Instructions for the first day of the project week »Water«. Photograph by A. Iten, 2016

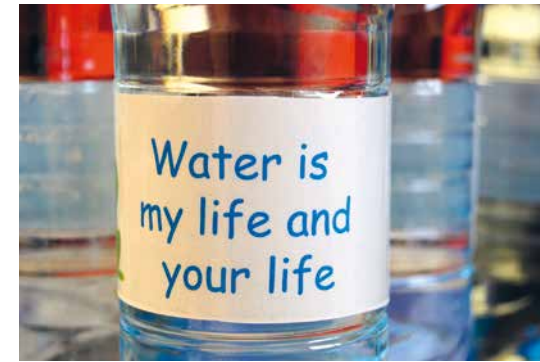
talks with officials from different institutions in Gaborone and the Ministry of Health and presented them in the form of interviews.

Group 3: *Water use in Gaborone and on the campus.* – Eventually, this group limited their research activities to the aspect of the use of water on the campus itself and conducted interviews with students, instructors and other staff, in particular from the cleaning personnel. The total consumption of water on campus is one million litres per day. What became apparent throughout the study was the general lack of awareness of this problem. The group also drafted solutions on how to reduce water consumption (ranging from the installation of timers etc. to water rationing). – Reference was made to the historical fact that, apart from financing through public funds and potent private sponsors, it was contributions (cattle, chickens etc.) made by the »normal« population which, to no small extent, facilitated the building of the university. Thus, there is a special obligation on the students to give something back to those people and use the campus as a laboratory for analysing the important question of water consumption and developing counterstrategies that minimise water loss.

Group 4: *Reversing climate change by Holistic Planned Grazing (adapted from a project of Allan Savory developed for Zimbabwe).* – Since livestock makes an important contribution to the national economy of Botswana, this group was concerned with the causes of climate change, one of which is the desertification of pastures. The students developed questions adapted to the situation in Botswana which may lead to developing methods and possibilities to control livestock movement. This group,

too, did not only work on the »drawing board« but also carried out interviews, e.g. with officials from the ministry of agriculture, in order to discuss the present situation and learn more about the stakeholders to be included in such a project. – This project had already been discussed in the preparational group work in Switzerland before it was presented in the working group in Botswana. This was not the case for the other working groups and topics.

Group 5: *#whatareyoudoing.* The research activities in this group partly overlapped with those carried out by group 3. The difference, however, was the focus on the use of recycled water in everyday life, especially in households. For this, the group conducted interviews with passers-by in the streets of Gaborone in order to learn more about their attitude towards the use of reprocessed water and in particular their readiness to really use such water. Further interviews with students on UB Campus were edited into an aesthetically pleasing film to make them usable for social media.



Water bottle for preschool education. Photograph by A. Iten, 2016



Preschool education on the topic of water. Photograph by A. Iten, 2016

## SUMMARY

Throughout the project week, the students received support and advice from the instructors. However, no (officially scheduled) interim meetings were held in the Swiss group (students and instructors) in order to avoid attenuating critique or differences of opinion. The concluding meeting with the students from HyperWerk was only held on the Saturday following the project week. Here, the Swiss students and instructors were given a first opportunity to engage in retrospection and point out criticism. At this meeting, no participants from Botswana were present (and no UB instructors either). In this setting the Swiss students expressed their experiences and addressed conflicts very openly. Some of these aspects are presented below.

Beyond all positive feedbacks, the differences between the educational systems became apparent here. While the system at HyperWerk is extraordinarily open, even in comparison to other Swiss or western universities, this is not the case in Botswana where the educational practice is based on a more hierarchical structure.

Another example of the differences between the two education systems was that most of the students from Botswana would have liked to be given a task to process throughout the week right at the beginning. This attitude in particular met with incomprehension among the Swiss students who are used to independently developing and implementing topics.

Leaving aside that the criticism of a rather cautious attitude might be due to habits ingrained by education and, on top of this, that the workshop brought together students from quite different disciplines, the discussion revealed the larger cultural context behind this incomprehension. Note that the issue is not whether this criticism is justified or not – rather, the point is that this perception on the part of the Swiss students was of major significance to their critical appreciation of the workshop.

It is the Calvinistic imprint carried by them, which sociologist Max Weber spells out in his Protestant Ethics Thesis and which is the fundament of significant values in western cultures as industrially stamped societies. The intensive discussions around this topic during the concluding meeting gave sudden rise to deeply embedded colonial clichés.

Already here, the value of conducting a workshop with participants from different cultural backgrounds directly working together on a common topic in a *problem-oriented* way was more than obvious. *Cooperating* with different culturally transmitted values requires a critical turn towards one's own thinking strategies.

Very positively assessed was the topic of water itself, the findings and insights that resulted from the work on it. It allowed to raise the awareness and, as a consequence, the insight that global problems can only be tackled by applying local strategies which involve the local people affected and take into account the specific cultural situation – and not by merely studying the existing cultural particularities in a one-sided, abstract way. On a more general level, this addresses the ever different question of design (and thinking) strategies, which arises anew in each place.



An ending but also a beginning. Photograph by A. Iten, 2016



# EXPERIENCING BOTSWANA AND THE PROJECT WEEK WATER

## CHRISTIAN HOLLIGER MOTIVATION

When I think about the significance of water in my life, I cannot imagine what it would mean not to have it in abundance. Of course, I have theoretical knowledge of the problem of water scarcity in other countries, as well as of water contamination, water privatisation and melting glaciers. But it's hard to imagine how this issue might affect my life here in central Europe.

While I was working and travelling abroad, I encountered the problems and solutions associated with this issue everywhere: from desertification in Southern Portugal to the fact that even in rich countries like Norway the sewage runs directly into the sea. On the other hand, I also experienced the effectiveness of a »*water retention landscape*« (a permacultural concept developed by Sepp Holzer) and, in October 2015, I worked on a house that collects its own water and uses it four times before releasing it again.

Up until now, then, my approach to water has been from a more technical or ecological angle. And, intuitively, I ask myself how design might mitigate the serious situation in Botswana. But ever since I started studying at HyperWerk I have been scrutinising my own understanding of the notion of »design«, and I am sure the project week will change that understanding. Furthermore, I see a real opportunity for cultural exchange, although it will not be easy to face my own preconceptions. Still, I see this challenge as the basis for the success of our collaboration.

I am also critical with regard to the legitimacy of my trip to Botswana. I do not consider my personal development and experience alone to be reason enough to fly 10.000 kilometres one-way! I hope that this exchange will have an impact on both the people of Botswana and of Switzerland, and my desire to support cultural exchange makes me eager to be part of this project week! I strongly expect the *Cultural Spaces and Design* research project week to help establish a better understanding between cultures.

## OTHER MOTIVATIONS

Both the continent of Africa and travel in an unknown culture have an exotic charge. The marketing campaigns of the travel industry with their »atmospheric« images of nature and wild animals are part of a film that plays in my subconscious. For me, travel is above all the attempt to learn without the aid of a script – it means moving through foreign places, abandoning myself to what is new, forging contacts and confronting my own stereotypes and notions of otherness.

Moreover, an organised, well thought-out trip implies that the overall situation will also be well managed and promises a project of special quality. Highly focused preparations and wrap-up sessions point to an exceptional learning experience and sound results.

In addition, I have the significant recognition that I live in a global situation marked by colonialism, imperialism, globalisation, development aid, sustainable development etc. One consequence of this situation, however, is the current increase in global migration which is exposing the gulf between rich and poor. Responsibility for the globally unequal distribution of opportunity concerns me not as a single individual but rather as a part of society. That the legacy of our ancestors imposes a collective burden is a fact which influences my actions consciously and, often, unconsciously. My own assessment of this problematic political situation means that I look for different solutions instead of retaining my own privileges at the expense of others – something I don't always succeed in! In my view, the complex connections between continents and countries require changes in the way we cooperate, so that awareness of cultural difference becomes part of the fabric of our collaborative work.

## PROJECT WEEK »WATER«

These descriptions should not be understood as generalisations. My own behaviour necessarily also influenced that of the Botswanan students and my own attitude has had an impact on what has gone into this documentation. This report therefore has the sole purpose of reflecting on the collaborative work during the project week.

Several weeks after the end of my trip in March 2016 and my return to a familiar environment, I continue to feel the effects of my experiences. On the one hand, people from other cultures will always stimulate my interest, while on the other, the »blessings« of our more moderate latitudes have become clearer to me. The word for »blessing« in Botswana is *pula*, which is also the word for »rain«. I observe within myself an altered awareness of cultural difference and of the issue of water scarcity.

In Botswana, I experienced water rationing in a city for the first time – for example, when there was too little water pressure to have a proper shower or when soap stuck to my hands because there was suddenly no more water from the tap. I was confronted with a new, discomforting situation, and the thoughts it provoked are revealing. I noticed myself thinking that I was glad to be able to return to Switzerland. I was back with my accustomed comforts, where everything worked properly, and I didn't have to think twice about it. That was not the case in Gaborone. In the large

single room of the hotel, the shower and big bathtub seemed to whisper to the guest: »Go on, take a bath!« In light of the water situation, however, I found that confusing and, paradoxically, it led to me behaving more frugally. At the university, on the other hand, the toilets at the upper levels were locked which can be taken as a sign of the lack of water on campus. In Block 3, one of the city's districts, water pressure was so reduced on several days of the week that only a thin stream flowed from the tap. This situation required residents to adapt and it compelled me to question my own values and ideas.

## HOW TO WORK

That the make-up of the groups had been decided in advance meant there was an unnecessary power imbalance between students and lecturers which undervalued the social skills of students. It acted as a drag on motivation and inhibited the ability of the groups to reach agreement on the issues. It was the opposite of what I had expected from intercultural collaboration – which was to see the project week as a »design challenge«. At the level of the individual, the competitiveness and pressure which this approach inspires are analogous to modern colonialism. On the other hand, I understood that the project week was not about harmonising different ways of working together but about developing my own consciousness of the problem, my own capacity to reflect on the extent and conditions of my feelings of foreignness in a global world. How can collaborations succeed under such conditions? That became the key question for me.

## HOLISTIC PLANNED GRAZING

I had already done some work on the method of *Holistic Planned Grazing* (HPG) prior to the project week. HPG is a method for combating large-scale desertification with the help of large herds of cattle. Allan Savory, who developed this technique, is a biologist and environmental activist from Zimbabwe, a country that borders Botswana to the east. This geographical and cultural proximity led me to raise the issue in my project group, and due to the almost identical nature of the problem in Botswana, it encountered broad interest. The connection to the issue of water came from the fact that considerable areas of Botswana are affected by severe erosion that prevents the already low rainfall from penetrating the surface and being stored in the fertile upper layers of soil. The trampling action of cattle hooves effectively ploughs up and loosens this uppermost layer. They also help to break down the tall dry grasses which do not then have to be burned off, meaning that CO<sub>2</sub> is stored in the earth and not released back into the atmosphere. Soil quality is improved, and that has a positive effect on biomass productivity.

In our group we studied this idea further and looked for ways of publicising it in Botswana. We contacted various governmental and non-governmental organisations and, at the same time, we put together a brief information brochure explaining *Holistic Planned Grazing* and outlined its connection to existing agricultural ideas in Botswana.

## EXPERIENCES IN COLLABORATIVE WORK

The project week was an intensive introduction to a foreign culture. Linguistic difficulties, but more importantly cultural questions (e.g. how students from the University of Botswana reacted to me) made for an interesting week. In my first encounters I intuitively behaved as I had in other cooperative projects. It was interesting, but not easy, to respond to the question: How should I understand what people are saying and how should I read their non-verbal body language? In three weeks I underwent a process in which my initial inability to tell the difference between the locals or to recognize their individual characteristics ended with the insight that they were much more like me than I had originally thought. Suddenly, a range of characters emerged – people with similar questions about life to me – and towards whom I felt either an attraction or an aversion.

In retrospect, I think that at the beginning of the week I encountered the Botswana students on an equal footing. In the course of the project, however, this became more and more difficult. I became increasingly frustrated about our different attitudes to work and quickly developed the feeling that they were overestimating my abilities. I tried to shake off their dependence on me by asking questions that highlighted their knowledge and abilities. I thought of myself as a catalyst who would trigger a local process. In spite of this – or, perhaps, because of it – I became the leading person in the group, as a consequence of both my own behaviour and theirs. A kind of pedagogical approach emerged which, contrary to my hopes for a more collaborative effort, led to a disparity of power. There are different ways of explaining this, namely on an educational or personal level, and on a cultural or historical level.

I think the students were not used to having a launch straight into a discussion. Instead, they found it convenient that I already had a concept, and Mmoloki said: »It was an easy and pleasant week because you arrived with an idea.« In my view, that led to a relation of dependency that made my presence indispensable. In addition, it became apparent during the week that not everybody in the group had been won over by the project theme. There was a noticeable difference between students who were interested and those who were simply fulfilling a prescribed task.

On several occasions I tried to talk about the cultural and methodological aspects of our work together, to take a step back and reflect on our plan. But at that point, and under the pressure of time, I clearly sensed the direction in which the UB students wanted to move: there was a presentation on Friday! There was no time to lose – so let's just follow the plan. This led to what was probably the greatest source of tension in our group. Our discussions about all this took place at the very limit of our linguistic and subject matter knowledge – and also of our capacity for empathy.

At the same time, a process had begun during the week that led to a greater mutual understanding. In all probability, this is the only real way of constructively dealing with differences and of combatting the illusion of harmony. Intercultural collaboration has the potential to produce mutual understanding. In contrast to the expectations aroused by the introductory sessions, however, such understanding can



Photographs by C. Holliger, 2016



only inspire when it is removed from compulsion and competition. Seen from this angle, the week was about recognising our different methods in a common work situation and about getting to know the cultural aspects that underlie these differences.

The project week also raised new questions. The postcolonial situation means that a direct encounter involves two sides: an »other« side characterised by and sensitive to racism and exploitation, and »our« side which has to deal with the fear of slipping back into older colonial patterns.

Where, then, is the border between a quiet diffidence on the one hand and, on the other, my personal impulse to create space for my own views? I also believe that diffidence or restraint is not an acceptance of the above-mentioned fear but rather a move to protect oneself from it. It is only by accepting the »other«, and by experiencing a discourse lived in partnership with this »other« that these historical patterns can be broken. In my opinion such subliminal questions are of crucial importance for breaking down the subjective distance between people. But there is also another question: What is culture anyway? In these encounters there is a danger of reducing human difference to »culture« and thereby disregarding the fact that culture is itself a material construction.

From a cultural-historical point of view I think I had a special role as a »white man«, which clearly emphasised my difference. The students had explained that there was a greater confidence in foreigners, and that therefore I was the key to success. I asked myself whether this confidence had to do with my person or whether it was grounded in my role as a »white man«. Even though I am not able to answer that question, it was my skin colour and my gender – and their historical implications – that allowed our group to gain easy access to the Ministry of Agriculture. That meant that the group pushed me to the front in other situations, with the excuse that they needed me for that purpose.

## SUMMARY

Intercultural understanding and collaboration constitute an immense field of global processes which every designer can make the subject of his or her own work. Current trends in migration, for example, represent a challenge due to the encounters they produce between diverse cultures. Here, too, we need new solutions which deliberately include a diversity of actors within the design process itself. It would therefore be fascinating to appreciate difference and conflict for what they are, and to acknowledge that they form the basis for a sophisticated debate – particularly on the subject of one's own culture. It is here that I have some hope for a practice which neither denies difference nor requires the rejection of the »other«, and which therefore treads a new path of mutual acceptance.

## OUTLOOK

It is important to ask how we might shape experiences so that they trigger a critical discussion with the problems described above. For example, what kind of learning process do invited guests go through? What is it for the hosts? I assume that the experience is more profound and far-reaching for travellers since they have left their comfort zone, and their preconceptions are being put to the test. To put it provocatively, the project week has been a form of consumption which only served to advance one's own privilege. I would therefore suggest that we invite institutions from other countries and perhaps enable new experiences for less privileged individuals.



Photograph by C. Holliger, 2016

# THE ATTRACTION OF WATER

TOSCA WAEBER

## MOTIVATION

Water plays an important role in our culture. People meet at rivers or at lakes, they barbecue and cool off in the limpid waters. Water has always had this power to attract. Socially and culturally, water has a huge importance.

I would like to develop a more comprehensive knowledge and better understanding of water issues because they concern us all. We all live on this planet, and now is the time to learn from one another. Perhaps the project week in Botswana will be the beginning of my being able to see this problem more clearly, and I can explore opportunities for making a positive contribution in the field.

I am trying to go to Botswana without any expectations or preconceptions. I am, however, feeling very tense.

## WATER IN DAILY LIFE

The significance of water and water shortages is everywhere. Gaborone has at least one day per week without water. Every household therefore lays in a big supply of water, stored in various types of containers. Water is mainly imported from abroad as there is water in only one of Gaborone's two dams – and even this is now only at 18% of its usual capacity. The rest is dry! In hotels, on golf courses and at the university, artificial turf replaces the natural green of grass.

The national significance of water and the high value placed on it can also be seen in the Botswanan flag, whose main colour is blue. The »drop« or *pula* is the name of Botswana's currency, and names with rain, water or drop are widespread. Like »Mapula« – the name I was given because on the day I first stepped on Botswanan soil it rained – for the first time in a year! Just unbelievable ...

## PROJECT WEEK »WATER«

At the beginning of the week the project theme was seen by my group as essentially requiring a technical solution. It was only after several discussions, and when we realised that no technical solution could be worked out in just one week, that the social aspect of water was accepted as our theme. From the following conversations it became apparent that people were very wasteful of water. Together, we came to the conclusion that it was our task to change this situation. From my perspective, and after some research, it was clear that one has to begin by raising people's awareness and educating them. People have not adapted their actual use of water to the dramatic shortages which can be felt everywhere. Valuable resources are often treated with no regard for tomorrow. Recycling is just not thought about. People have no faith in it as a method.

Throughout the city there are posters with slogans such as: »Reduce your shower to three minutes« or »Please turn your tap off when there is no water« etc. The problem is recognized and communicated, but it doesn't lead to any changes in thinking or to any results – at least as far as I could see.

At the beginning of the week I held myself back and focused on asking questions in order to understand the local culture and society better. I was really very glad that I had arrived a few days earlier and was able to form my own picture of Botswana. Early contact with the students would have simplified things still further. A week is really too short, especially when you have to get to know other people and you can



Photograph by T. Waeber, 2016



only do this on the fly during the project. Although I am a friend of hard work, one first has to see the cultural differences and come to grips with them. For that you need time, because first you need to create a sense of trust; and you have to get a sense of the strengths and weaknesses of everyone else before you can engage with them.

We had a few conflicts to deal with. We agreed we would educate children of preschool and primary school age to use water carefully. My group wanted to make a comic that could be distributed in schools. It was a wonderful idea that I thought could be expanded upon. But the group was very sceptical about my idea of developing a complete initiative around it. At the start they simply didn't understand what I wanted to achieve. I proposed a whole presentation we could actually give using video, images and the honest reactions of the kids. In this respect I really am a child of HyperWerk. As industrial designers, my colleagues tended to see the final product, whereas I saw the opportunities and initiatives we could carry out with it.

This clash put us right in the middle of a crisis because it seemed as if the others didn't want to continue with the idea. I think it was the right decision to bring in both our lecturers, Richie Moalosi (Botswana) and Regine Halter (Switzerland), because afterwards we once again found neutral ground and had the assurance we needed to move forward.

## DIFFERENCES IN METHODS

The main tool used was Illustrator. Indeed it was used for everything, even our presentation, which I found quite funny. The most controversial point between us was the fact that everything is downloaded from the internet, but absolutely no regard is paid to copyright.

On the other hand I noticed that the students are taught to argue, to set out and defend their own position. Rigorous criticism was part of everyday life at the University of Botswana.

I did not play a big part in the work on materials or their design since I was curious myself as to how the students work and express themselves (the comic, the figures, the branding, design of the presentation etc.). However, I got involved again for the presentation method. I organised and edited the videos and modified the images with Photoshop. I definitely wanted to use somehow the presentation model developed by Jan Engel, a guest lecturer at HyperWerk. It involves using one's own logo, giveaways, video and images. This model was adopted by the whole group. Presentation design was taken on by Matrix and Socrates. Everyone got involved at the point where they thought they knew more than the others. Socrates was brilliant with the kids, Matrix and Dimpho were able to go wild with Illustrator, Linda and I set to with organising and fixing details, and with the basic set-up of the project as well as its final execution.

As far as I could see, students in Botswana are not so accustomed to working in groups, something that I think showed clearly in their organisation and communication, and in their approach to other people.

## SOCIAL ASPECTS OF COMMUNICATION

Of the students I worked with, those who had been abroad themselves or who came from abroad and had therefore experienced the meaning of hospitality and culture shock were the ones most curious and understanding. They also showed the biggest interest in us as people – something which was either barely or not at all evident with the others.

I think the individual's motives to participate in the project week are an important and fundamental piece of information that ought to be exchanged by both sides before any undertaking of this sort. I would also like these activities to be based on a mutual exchange: they should take place both abroad and in Switzerland in order for participants to build a complete picture. The same thing should be done with other students in Switzerland, e.g. with architects or environmental engineers or other more technically oriented disciplines.

Modesty and self-restraint are virtues for us as well and we consider them a sign of respect for others. Students in Botswana think of this behaviour as racist: anyone who e.g. apologises straight away for bumping into someone or who keeps their distance out of respect or a sense of insecurity just doesn't want to have anything to do with them, doesn't want any contact, doesn't respect them etc. – at least that is the view of the Botswanan students.

## A SHORT EXTRACT FROM MY TRAVEL DIARY. EXPERIENCES OF BEING BLACK OR BEING WHITE

For the Botswanans being black is a plus, otherwise it would automatically be a minus. From our side, exactly the opposite is the case.

»Oh no, there are cops ahead! Come on, you drive! They'll never stop a white chick.«

»What, you don't like sleeping in your hotel room? What kind of crazy white lady are you then!«

»That's funny, your skin goes red when you press it!« This came after an exchange of physical contact throughout the group. »Is that the same for all of you?«

»Re tswehre stocko sa makgoa – Hanging around with the white girls!« It was the absolute hit on this trip. A local rapper had incorporated this sentence into his most recent song and it was really being thrashed. At every opportunity you heard someone yell this sentence, followed by long drawn-out laughter. Of course we got into it as well and used the phrase ourselves after a while. Fantastic!

»If we come to visit you, will we have problems because we're black?« There was this idea that they might not be accepted on our turf because of their skin colour.

A major point of conflict surfaced when our two Swedish flatmates, Elias and Eric, found out that our landlady, Snowy, had sublet her rooms during her week's holiday and so was pocketing twice the rent. Elias and Eric did not agree with this and confronted Snowy. Close to tears, she argued aggressively and forcefully: »This is my house and you have no say. Don't step on me as if I were a cockroach! This is my house and





Photograph by T. Waeber, 2016

*I've worked hard for it. Is it because I'm a woman? Or because of my skin colour? It must be because I'm black.»*

This touchy situation shows that, if in doubt, the major difference between us seems to be our skin colour. Or at least it is used as a pretext.

Prayer and death as everyday companions

Sunday is church day. People sing, pray and celebrate Christianity together in the kind of free and uninhibited way I have never experienced elsewhere. Of course, it is all accompanied by wonderful gospel singing.

Before our ten-hour journey to Maun, Tey Tey's mama called. She was switched to loudspeaker, and we listened to her prayer with eyes closed. Shortly after, Nick and Tinty's families called to wish us a safe journey. It is a wonderful custom which doesn't come out of nowhere: while we were in Botswana two of our friends lost two of their friends in a car accident. Death is a constant presence. We heard of five fatalities during our month-long stay in Botswana.

«Grace» is said before every meal.

## AND SOME MORE NOTES

What is on the table belongs to anyone who wants it! Food, cigarettes, beer, drinks, pens etc. are used by the collective and seem to have no personal value. Everything is shared.

Family life has no dining culture in our sense. Food is mainly purchased from malls as a takeaway in styrofoam packaging and eaten at home. We found cooking and barbecuing to be highly unusual events.

Women have new hairstyles almost every week and they are worn as accessories. I asked myself whether this constant change also implied a change of role. Hair is part of our identity, and for us it would imply a change of role. [...]

Personal reflection after a month of intensive experiences

In retrospect, I can see that I unconsciously and quite automatically had a romantic vision of the country and its culture, and I was disappointed when this was not fulfilled. I also had to struggle with myself because in this society I found myself again in a gilded cage. The building has a wall around it and is protected by an electric fence. After dark I don't go anywhere on my own.

There is this sentence I heard from a number of people we mixed with. It really affected me and profoundly touched my emotions: *»You brought us together, you made us one, and we have become stronger.«* Could there be a more beautiful footprint than this to leave behind? It is just amazing that we were allowed to take such an unplanned step into their lives, and that we are now bound together as a group.

*»Motho ke Motho ka Batho – We are who we are because of you«* is the motto of the Botswanan people and it has both inspired and changed me.



Photograph by T. Waeber, 2016



# POINTS OF VIEW

## CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA

CATHERINE WALTHARD  
VENUE AND PARTNERS

The third international workshop took place in April 2016 in Canberra, the capital of Australia. It was carried out in collaboration with our partners from the School of Art, College of Arts & Social Sciences, Australian National University (ANU).

The school is on the same campus where our research project had started just two years before.<sup>1</sup> We had chosen that destination because of Australia's history of immigration and its multicultural society. We were keen to see if our topic would be of any interest among art and design education practices. It proved to be. In the workshop in 2016, HyperWerk HGK FHNW (Academy of Art and Design at the University of Applied Sciences, Basel) participated with six students of the first, second and third Bachelor year, aged between 22 and 42 years. ANU School of Art participated with 20 students in their first year Master Visual Arts, aged between 22 and 62 years. The Swiss and the Australian students, as well as the lecturers, came from various countries worldwide, i.e. from different cultural backgrounds.

The concept, planning, and supervision of the project week was carried in Australia by Gilbert Riedelbauch, Postgraduate Coursework Convener, ANU School of Art and Design, and Dr. Sarah Scott, Assistant, ANU Centre for Art History and Art Theory, and in Switzerland by Prof. Catherine Walthard with Tatiana Tavares, based in Auckland, New Zealand, Associate Researcher of *Cultural Spaces and Design*.

Our workshop was embedded in a course named *Points of View – Independent Creative Art and Media Practice*, an obligatory course for graduates in the Master's Programme of Visual Arts at ANU School of Art.<sup>2</sup> Due to different semester regulations in Switzerland and Australia, it was quickly clear that we had to work with mixed levels of students. The decision was taken without hesitation, and the plan was to accompany and complement the entire workshop process with the fields represented in the *Cultural Spaces and Design* project. The students reflected on both the relevance of creative practices common to specific multicultural environments



Before the workshop week, exploring the Arboretum. Photograph by C. Walthard, 2016



and their implications, such as values, processes, aesthetics, social structures, and economic conditions.

## THE PREPARATION OF THE WORKSHOP

The preparation process took seven months, with variations in intensity, involving one-to-one as well as group meetings with the travelling students, regular mails and Skype conversations with the supervisors, and precise briefings with the research team.

During this phase we introduced and discussed with the students from Switzerland the notions of *Material culture*<sup>3</sup>, *Language*<sup>4</sup>, and *Being on the move*<sup>5</sup>. They formulated a series of questions which would guide them through the whole project:

- How can I as a designer express and communicate my work through materials within a specific cultural context?
- How do others understand me, and how does this understanding affect and shape my own point of view and, as a consequence, the material artefacts I create?
- How do my using a foreign language and my own point of view interact with one another?

A key point in the preparation phase was that all the students of the Swiss group presented themselves to the Australian students by submitting their motivation papers in English. The papers were sent to Australia two months before the workshop started. They included information on one's own cultural origins, a CV, a list of creative practice skills, the latest project, and on the motivation to meet our hosts in Australia. All these preparational texts turned out to be an essential practice towards understanding one's own aims and expectations.

## THE WORKSHOP WEEK BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER

When you travel from the Northern to the Southern hemisphere and to a whole new continent for such a short time, the wish to see ›it all‹ is big, impossible to be fulfilled, and thus frustrating. Projections, myths and clichés feed the imagination. There are mixed feelings of joyful and anxious excitement to meet the Australian students. We had some days before the workshop to be ›on our own‹, to gather ourselves after the long flight, and to explore the campus and its surroundings. We walked. We visited the Arboretum and the Botanical Garden, where guides introduced us to the varieties of forests and plants of Australia. We drove – a big Thank You to Gilbert, our course conveyor – to the coast of the Tasmanian sea and back, and we could experience over some hundreds of kilometres the contrasting changes in landscapes and colours, from lush green to dusty red to sea blue.

During the workshop week the topic of *Cultural Spaces* supported strongly the dynamics of interactions between the students.

The first workshop day raised a spontaneous discussion about names among the students. Depending on the native language of the students there were problems

in understanding and pronouncing correctly the names of students from another cultural background. The whole group assessed the necessity to start learning how to address the other's name in their native language – a first practice of openness and respect for diversity.

During the workshop week we all noticed and regretted that there was not enough open time for interaction between the Swiss and the Australian students. The few moments in reading groups became spaces of intensive and trustful talks about culture and creative practice, about language, translation, and the feeling of foreignness. These rare moments enabled a closeness and feeling of connection, which in turn opened the space for learning from one another: one of the Australian students, shortly after the workshop week, reoriented her Master's theme to reconnect with her cultural origins.<sup>6</sup> Two years later, one of the Swiss students based her diploma thesis on the notion of interconnectedness, which had been raised during the workshop.<sup>7</sup>

At the end of the workshop week, an Australian student invited the Swiss group to show his home and meet his family and friends. He sensed that the workshop could establish only a certain level of cultural encounter and that we were missing a personal daily-life insight. He and his family opened us their home and their art studio. We cooked together, neighbours joined in, it felt so welcoming and warm-hearted, like being at an old friends' place, even though so far from home.

After the workshop week, the Swiss students travelled, without lecturers, together for a week, appreciating with each other a different form of friendly relationship developed throughout the workshop week. One Swiss student stayed longer. Her travel to Australia was part of her diploma thesis which addressed the notion of *cultural hybridity*.<sup>8</sup>

The required material outputs of the workshop included from each student of the Swiss group a three-minute keynote for the final day of the workshop week and a text-based report for ANU and HyperWerk. In addition, we asked for an optional free documentation, which one student did develop for our final research colloquium a year later.<sup>9</sup> Together with the students we set up a collection of audio, video and image files, all of which went into the archive of the research project.

The outputs of the workshop yielded visual and emotional impressions, in relationships, in critical group and self-reflections, and in a questioning of institutional differences and learning processes. The most delicate items to evaluate are the immaterial aspects of this learning process, not only in Canberra. Everyone involved in this workshop week gained a new and differentiated awareness for the theme of cultural spaces within art and design education.

## NOTES

1. The project kick-off was hosted by Dr. Jacqueline Lo from the ANU Centre of European Studies, moderation by Prof. Dr. Diana Davis. The participants were lecturers and students (BA, MA, PhD) from the University of Canberra and The Australian National University. <https://politicsir.cass.anu.edu.au/centres/ces/news/cultural-spaces-and-design-perspectives-design-education-workshop>
2. In his contribution *Connotations in material (cultures)*, Gilbert Riedelbauch will detail the proceedings of the workshop *Points of View*.
3. Prown defines material culture as a »study through artefacts of the beliefs, values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions of a particular community or society at a given time«. (Jules D. Prown, 1982: *Mind in Matter: An introduction to material culture theory and method*. In: Winterthur Portfolio, 17:1). The use of objects as primary data indicates a way to investigate culture through material (and/or vice-versa) and understand the relationships between human-made objects, their processes and the culture in which they existed. By undertaking cultural interpretation through artefacts, we can engage the other culture in the first instance not only with our minds – the seat of our cultural biases – but also with our senses. (Cf. also Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan; Linda van Laren, 2012: *Towards academic generativity: working collaboratively with visual artefacts for self-study and social change*. In: *South African Journal of Education*, (32)4, Pretoria.)
4. According to MacShane, Calvino says: »Without translation I would be limited to the borders of my own country. The translator is my most important ally. He introduces me to the world.« (Frank MacShane, 1983: *The Fantasy World of Italo Calvino*. <http://www.nytimes.com/1983/07/10/magazine/the-fantasy-world-of-italo-calvino.html?pagewanted=all> Accessed on: February 25, 2016). – In cultural studies, ideas about translation can be discussed as an »in-between space« (cf. Homi K. Bhabha), an idea that Paul Ricœur describes as an ethical problem involving »mediation between the plurality of cultures and the oneness of humanity«. He calls the experience of translation a place »where the pleasure of inhabiting the other's language is compensated by the pleasure of welcoming home the foreign word«. (Quoted after: Modesta di Paola, 2013: *Translation in Visual Arts*.) Di Paola understands translation as a process of emulating, adapting, rewriting and recreating; to be described as an »interdisciplinary act« in visual arts. <http://interartive.org/2013/08/translation-in-visual-art/> Ac
5. One of the German words for experience – *Erfahrung* – comes from old German *irfaran*: to travel, to go out, to cross or to wander. Leed discusses the idea of a journey as a form of voyage that involves an existential change or even a cultural growth (cf. Eric J. Leed, 1991: *The Mind of the Traveler*. New York: Basic Books 1991:21). – Jilly Traganou states: »[...] the role of the traveller as an ›other‹ is constitutional to the development of the self (both of the individual and of the collective identity of a group), not only because we define ›ourselves‹ in relation or contrast to ›others‹, but also because the process of ›otherness‹ is often integral to the formation of identity.« (Quoted from: Parsons The New School, New York 2007, course description *Design and Travel*, Fall 2007. Instructor: Jilly Traganou.)
6. See the contribution of Amardeep Shergill, *The Cultural Spaces project as a practical learning resource*.
7. As Jennifer Ruesch, in her HyperWerk diploma thesis »*Stitching Interconnectedness*«, (2018) writes: »In April 2016, while attending [...] *Points of View – Connotations in Material (Culture)* [...] I felt a personal connection to Penny Evans' work *Stranded at the 2nd Tamworth Textile Triennial*. It was evident that the work depicted society, relating to family structures and the non-verbal communication over the generations. Arts speak as a language connecting people; it was then that I was first introduced to the term interconnectedness.«
8. See the contribution of Andrina Stauffer, *Between Things*.
9. See the contribution of Nora Fankhauser, *Colour Travelogue*.



After the workshop week, bicycling in Adelaide. Photograph by N. Fankhauser, 2016



# CONNOTATIONS IN MATERIAL (CULTURES)

## GILBERT RIEDELBAUCH

In April 2016 the *Cultural Spaces* project from the Institute HyperWerk in Basel, Switzerland collaborated with the School of Art & Design at the Australian National University in Canberra. Two diverse groups of students joined in an educational research enterprise that aimed to develop their point of view about the creative practices of others and, by extension, their own. The project was thoroughly prepared and the expectations for it were high.

The collaboration of international students brought cultural and educational differences, as well as similarities, into focus. Expectations, language, course structure and communication were part of the shared experience and became topics reflected on in this report.

The following analysis, based on observations and feedback from students and staff, outlines the environment in which this project took place and gives an account of its outcomes.

## LOCATION

Our visitors from Switzerland arrived in what is arguably the most westernised area of Australia's eastern seaboard, Canberra – Australia's capital. Canberra is located between Sydney and Melbourne and, with a population of more than 400 000, it is Australia's largest inland city. Australia has a multicultural society with one in four people born overseas, and as a first-world country the signs of globalisation are omnipresent.

The familiarity this engendered in our European visitors clashed on occasions with the rural and remote image promoted by Australia's tourism industry. Some of the participants' expectations required re-adjustment and a nuanced approach to identify existing cultural differences. As one student noticed: »*It is absurd that one can travel that far and everything seems to be the same.*« On the other hand, these similarities provided comfort for some: »*While being on the other side of the world I felt at*

*home.*« In any case, it was impressive to witness how swiftly most participants were able to adjust their expectations and become immersed in their new surroundings.

The Australian National University (ANU), a world-leading centre for education and research, is ranked number 1 in Australia and among the top 25 universities in the world. ANU's School of Art & Design is internationally recognised for studio-based teaching and offers undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes across a wide variety of creative disciplines.

## DEVELOPMENT

Staff and students at ANU were introduced to the *Cultural Spaces* project in 2014 during the *Cultural Spaces and Design. Prospects of Design Education* seminar at ANU's Centre for European Studies. We instantly recognised the potential for a meaningful contribution to explore local and global issues of art and design education as well as the investigation of culture through materials. The link between multicultural exposure in an art, craft and design context using language and self-reflection identified our *Points of View: Independent Creative Art and Media Practice* course as a suitable framework for a possible collaboration.

The following year, *Cultural Spaces* committed to a collaboration with the School of Art & Design to conduct a combined workshop called *Points of View – Connotations in Material (Cultures)*. In April 2016 Catherine Walthard and Tatiana Tavares arrived in Canberra together with six HyperWerk students to work with our Master by Coursework students for one week.

I was particularly pleased about how involved Catherine and Tatiana were as they directly contributed to delivering *Points of View*, making this project a truly



School of Art at the Australian National University in Canberra.

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collaborative project. I also had the good fortune of having Dr. Sarah Scott from the School's Centre for Art History and Art Theory assisting me with delivering this course to an unusually large cohort.

The initial results of our collaboration were presented during a three-day colloquium entitled *Globalisation is a Design Issue* in Basel, Switzerland in June 2017.

## POINTS OF VIEW + STRUCTURE

The title of our workshop *Connotations in Material (Cultures)* pointed to the cultural diversity of Australia's population, a multiculturalism informed by its first nations people and more than two hundred years of immigration. Andreas Ludwig links *material culture* and objects by observing that we are surrounded by a material culture whose objects are tied to society and the current time, and that Material Culture engenders the sum of all culturally charged single objects. (Ludwig, Andreas 2011)

We found that *Points of View*, with its assignment to develop a position on one's own creative practice, or that of others, by analysing works of art or design poses a meaningful challenge. Being a research-training course for the School's Master by Coursework programme, it provided a suitable platform for investigating material culture in the above-mentioned context.

ANU students would typically take this course at the beginning of their Master's studies and would therefore be only slightly more advanced in their educational journey than their colleagues from HyperWerk, who were in the later years of their Bachelor's degrees. The course's curriculum also aimed to familiarise participants with the conventions of academic writing and presenting.

During this intensive five-day course we introduced students to a variety of approaches for developing and evaluating creative works. One of these approaches was based on analysing works of art and their display in the context of an exhibition. For the second day, we had organised excursions to three selected exhibitions in Canberra. These three displays formed the framework of the course. To fulfill its requirements, all students had to draw from these three exhibitions for the investigation of objects and their display.

For this collaboration we selected an international travelling exhibition on display at a national institution, a craft/design exhibition presented at a regional gallery, and a solo show by a local and emerging female artist. Guided tours were part of all three exhibitions, and additional contextual information was provided by the curators for both the national and regional shows as well as by the artist for the solo show. Students were encouraged to take notes and images, make recordings and arrange for further visits to gather first-hand information. In combination, all these activities offered a comprehensive set of opportunities to support the development of a point of view.

While it is valuable to experience a work of art in its exhibition context, being introduced to the processes leading up to its creation can hold similar interest. A forum, held in the middle of the week and presented by three practising artists,

provided direct insight into their studio-based research. The Heads of our glass and painting disciplines, as well as Tatiana Tavares, presented on their respective creative processes and research.

Students used the opportunity to directly discuss with the presenters their questions concerning inspiration, process and materiality, thus gaining first-hand insights into how the artists translate their studio-based practice into research. This involves looking more closely at the underpinning concepts and contexts that drive their artistic practice.

The theoretical section on practice-led research was rounded up in a presentation by the School's Professor of Practice-led Research and two reading group sessions, one chaired by our colleagues from HyperWerk. Furthermore, catalogue essays, exhibition reviews, relevant articles and readings about academic skills were made available four weeks in advance via our online learning website to aid independent study and course preparation.

Uploaded to this website were also the résumés of the six Swiss participants. By describing their own cultural backgrounds and their motivation to be part of this project, as well as by showing examples of their work, they successfully introduced themselves to their ANU classmates prior to meeting them in person.

In preparation for this workshop, the HyperWerk students were asked to consider how cultural differences in Australia influence design/art education. The Swiss students seemed well-placed to identify similarities and differences, as their own cultural backgrounds, life experiences and creative practices were highly diverse. They met an equally diverse group in our ANU students: of 21 enrolments eleven were international students plus one of Aboriginal background. Together they also represented a mix of Visual Arts, Digital Arts and Design disciplines offered by the School of Art & Design.



Guided tour of the exhibition, 2nd Tamworth Textiles Triennial at Craft ACT, Craft and Design Centre Canberra. Photograph by T. Tavares, 2016





Reading group session. Photograph by C. Walthard, 2016



The main classroom. Photograph by C. Walthard, 2016

## MOTIVATION

One significant difference between our two groups was, however, their motivation. HyperWerk students joined *Points of View* voluntarily, while for our Master's students it was a compulsory part of their coursework. The learning outcomes required that students should be able to present a critical point of view in a reasoned, referenced, and clearly structured analysis, both in written and audio-visual forms. As a result, the timetable included two sessions delivered by the University's Study Skills Centre to develop academic writing skills, supported by a comprehensive set of online resources.

To establish students' progress, their participation in class, a seminar presentation (1000 words and audio-visuals), and the final 4000-word major essay were all taken into account. Students had only a few days during this week to form their ideas into a position – reach their point of view – and to prepare supporting text and images for a 15-minute presentation to the whole group at the end of the week. The ANU students had an additional four weeks to submit their major essay after that. HyperWerk students completed all activities and tasks, with the exception of the two written components. Their final seminar presentation on Friday afternoon included an additional reflection on their experience of the project, rather than the single focus on developing a point of view.

It is noteworthy that the choice to partake voluntarily did not express itself in a less engaged participation by the Swiss cohort in this course. Rather, I was impressed by the intensity and keen interest this group presented at every point throughout its densely structured curriculum. Both the students and staff from Switzerland contributed significantly to the success of this course and the project.

The benefits of studying together with students from HyperWerk were also recognised by the ANU students. As one pointed out: *»The exposure to students that came from overseas provided an invaluable contribution in terms of different perspectives. Plus the company was enjoyable.«* For instance, one of the Master's students, who also worked for the National Gallery of Australia, invited our visitors for a meal at his home. A personal experience highly valued and documented in the Swiss students' reflective reports. Likewise, the ANU students enjoyed the *»illuminating international perspectives«* they gained through their collaboration with students and staff from HyperWerk.

The pleasure of being part of this collaboration started well before the workshop itself. To best meet the demands of our respective educational and research enterprises, Catherine and I worked together on adjusting the course's curriculum. The selection of exhibitions, the sequence and chairing of sessions and staff presentations, as well as suggested readings, were all fine-tuned to provide a cognitive framework for our combined cohorts.

This preparation led to the design of an intensive five-day curriculum that was just that – intensive. At the ANU, courses delivered in such an intensive format have equal weighting with a semester-long course with weekly lectures and tutorials. With such a concentrated curriculum, intensives are designed to give our Master's students – some of whom are mature-aged – more options when planning their studies and life demands. This intensive option has become especially popular with students who are only able to study part-time. This short and intense delivery made an ideal format for our collaboration, as we were able to complete this workshop within a week.

For this workshop to succeed, thorough prior planning was as important as close adherence to the timetable. This style of course delivery was somewhat in contrast to the *»organic«* approach at HyperWerk. As a result, the Swiss students



perceived this structured and »*precisely planned*« delivery as limiting their opportunities for free exchange among themselves and with their Australian counterparts.

The different creative fields we operate in also inform the specific approaches we take in education. In the Visual Arts we typically educate the »lone ranger« rather than the team player fostered in Design Education. Individual work proposals, which value solo shows, the maker's mark and an artist-based studio practice, are all familiar terms reflected not only in arts education. They are also recognised categories when applying for project funding in the later stages of one's professional creative career.

Having said this, the ANU School of Art has undergone significant changes since our collaboration for *Cultural Spaces*. Now the School of Art & Design, it has established a Design stream offering pathways from Bachelor's through to Master's and PhD qualifications. The lone ranger is now challenged to look around him- or herself to take advantage of the collaborative and truly interdisciplinary study options that have arisen. As a consequence, teamwork and group projects have become more commonplace in our School.

## COMMUNICATION

In the feedback provided at the conclusion of our collaboration, almost all participants from HyperWerk stated that they would have enjoyed, indeed expected, more opportunity for communication between the student groups. To meet these expectations would have called for more open dialogue sessions than we had timetabled in the course. As one Swiss student observed, »*the personal exchange with participants proved to be a sensible method to move deeper into my own interests*«. Any opportunities for unstructured discussions with the ANU students further diminished as the course progressed and they became increasingly preoccupied with fulfilling the course's requirements on which their final mark depended.

While some exchanges happened outside the course, over dinner or at other events during the week, the task of developing a point of view and preparing the audio/visuals for their 15-minute presentation also placed demands on our visitors and curtailed their available time to nurture such exchanges.

Providing more room in the timetable for open discussions, allowing information to flow between peers, was brought into sharp focus while working with the HyperWerk students. Interestingly, none of the Master's students expressed a similar need for more unstructured discussion time in their feedback. In my view this might be a result of the high workload ANU students experience in *Points of View*; they are possibly happy to use all available time for progressing with their assignments.

The ease with which our respective student groups mixed during course activities was still noticeable and seemed to increase as the week progressed. The value of this combined workshop was certainly recognised by the ANU students, one of who remarked, »*the inclusion of the Swiss students added extra dimension to our course*«.



Last workshop day. Photograph by C. Walthard, 2016

## LANGUAGE

Australia's official language is English and is used to deliver all our courses at the School of Art & Design, with *Points of View* being no exception. Having a majority of students from non-English speaking backgrounds required awareness from academic staff and a systematic approach to make as much information as possible available in written form. Our online course-site was updated continuously through the week with texts and whiteboard images relating to the day's sessions as well as to students' own presentations as they became available. This method assisted students with their self-directed learning strategies and became a good record of the course itself.

The fact that I am originally a native German speaker helped on occasions to resolve ambiguous semantics in translations but didn't detract from the English delivery of the course. In spite of being familiar with operating in a second language myself, its importance for the Swiss students still caught me by surprise. The significant impact this has had on some of the HyperWerk students is well documented in their reflective reports.

While students from HyperWerk demonstrated excellent oral communication skills in social settings and excursions, to present in English was perceived as a challenge, especially during the first task – a short personal introduction to the whole group on the first day. All students had to introduce themselves in a three-minute, one-slide presentation focused on an artwork they had recently seen in an exhibition. While appearing to be thrown in at the deep end, this exercise was designed as an icebreaker. It also revealed to the group that being from a non-English speaking background was, indeed, a shared experience among the majority of students. Therefore, the hesitation to present and illustrate complex ideas in a second language was also familiar to most ANU students who call regions such as Asia, India or South America their home.

Having this attribute in common created an immediate understanding and tolerance in the student body, as confirmed by a Swiss student: *»After the introduction it became clear that we would not stand out from the group of students. This mix of people has made the sense of arrival in the workshop significantly easier.«* The recognition of this important levelling effect rendered superfluous any initial concerns about communicating and presenting in English.

A related observation noted by several students was that *»having to express oneself using a reduced vocabulary meant that sentences were also reduced to the quintessential message«*. This concentration of the message, albeit through a limited vocabulary, surfaced as a value that went beyond communication itself since it had the potential to shift also the quality of the argument it contained. One must clearly think through ideas before being able to articulate them in precise language. The following quote points towards this important insight: *»Practising English triggered new ways of thinking. I was forced to find poignant words to exactly describe my intentions.«*

As this shift in thinking occurred in the context of researching positions in material culture and the making of art and design objects, it also applied to these

fields. Furthermore, all participants in this course were artists, makers and/or designers. Therefore, this re-thinking of their position regarding material culture had an additional potential space for expression – the studio. Consequently, some started re-articulating their creative practice. As one student so eloquently phrased it, *»I realised the importance of me understanding my own identity in regards to how I communicate with others and how I express myself and my point of view. It has become clear to me that I had not taken this aspect of identity, language and point of view into serious consideration while I was creating.«*

This clearly shows that language had a more encompassing impact, going well beyond communication, and triggering processes of self-reflection as well as one's own creative development and practice. The student I quoted above continued to say, *»but most importantly I learned the significance of my identity, as a person in relationship to design strategies I choose, and that the more I understand my own language and form of communication, the more I grow as a practitioner and designer«*.

HyperWerk students came to this collaboration well prepared. Some had participated in earlier collaborations between the *Cultural Spaces* project and their other international educational partners in India and Botswana.

Before coming to Australia, Catherine and Tatiana had created a thorough eleven-page concept/planning paper designed to prepare students for our workshop. One instrument this document used was suggesting sets of research questions to help guide the participants. Among these questions was one foreshadowing the connection of language/communication and materials and processes; it asked students to consider: *»How does the other understand you, and how does this influence/shape your own point of view, and therefore the material artefacts you create?«*

As the above demonstrates, the student had engaged with these research questions but also went further than what was anticipated. In this case, the student ventured into linking his/her sense of identity to language and professional practice. For me, this is one of the most significant outcomes of this collaboration and raises further questions to be researched.

## FEEDBACK

All of the students' quotations are from two sources: the written reports by HyperWerk students and the formal ANU student evaluation of learning and teaching (SELT). Besides providing written feedback, the evaluation system also included giving a numeric response to statements concerning one's learning experience. These statements canvassed: awareness of expectations; support of activities; access to opportunities; feedback; and the overall satisfaction with this course. Students could rank their agreement level in response to these statements from 1 for ›strongly disagree‹ to 5 for ›strongly agree‹. We also asked the Swiss students these same questions to make the feedback of both cohorts comparable.

While the sample size is statistically small, the results are still of interest. For instance, both groups of students were equally satisfied with their overall learning



experience, rating it as 4.4 (88%) positive. The quality of the teaching and learning activities we had provided achieved a 4.5 (90%) and 4.6 (92%) agreement rating, with the diversity and quality of speakers especially commented upon. The lowest rating was in relation to access to »feedback« during the course, with 4.1 (82%) and 3.8 (76%) for the ANU and Swiss students respectively. As discussed above, the difference between the ANU and the Swiss students is likely to be connected to their perception of the options for exchange.

Any numerical rating is weak by itself. However, as I have delivered *Points of View* from 2015 up to and including 2018, I can confirm the above ratings were in line with previous and subsequent courses. It is indeed reassuring that in conducting this combined project – which involved teaching a larger, more diverse cohort, overlaid by a research interest within a global framework – we still maintained the ANU students' level of satisfaction with this course. The following feedback by an ANU student points to one of the reasons for this: »*The staff and students from HyperWerk, Basel, Switzerland provided illuminating international perspectives.*« No doubt the thorough preparation and thoughtful guidance of the *Cultural Spaces* team contributed to these results significantly.

## OUTCOMES/IMPACT

The collaboration between the *Cultural Spaces* project and *Points of View* was highly successful and attained a variety of additional outcomes.

At the most basic level, students from HyperWerk were able to experience the ANU's School of Art & Design while immersing themselves in a Master's level course. The goals of this course have been achieved, as all students successfully evaluated and interpreted a creative work and presented their *points of view*. One outcome of this experience – the contrast to their usual study experience in Switzerland – is documented in the students' reports. However, this collaboration had more outcomes than merely attending an academic course.

Before their journey to Australia, HyperWerk students foreshadowed in their resumés aspects of what they would like to achieve while at the School of Art & Design. Some ideas closely matched the intent of the project, while the plan of others, such as to engage with the School's craft and design disciplines, turned out to be unrealistic in the context of this intensive course. More than one student was disappointed about this. Further developing processes to target any erroneous preconceptions would help participants to adjust to changing circumstances.

The intensiv nature of this workshop and the quality of its content, including the dissemination and application of academic skills, proved to be beneficial for maintaining student focus. Some aspects, though, were not well served by this intensity. Both open-ended discussions and blue-sky thinking need time, time that we did not allow for during the week. The students' feedback about this had a demonstrative effect on the course's future development. I have since introduced changes to

the curriculum of *Points of View*, allowing for more unstructured exchanges and free discussions during the course.

When the *Cultural Spaces* project joined our research-training course, a platform for multicultural exchange and reflection emerged which was able to support an investigation beyond the prospects of design education. This project successfully demonstrated that seeing past obvious cultural differences and similarities, to spot the nuanced diversity of a given cultural space, could be achieved with such collaborations.

The hypothesis that multicultural exposure in the context of art, craft, and design can shift one's own ideas about creative practice has been upheld. This link was reinforced through reflecting on the impact of language while analysing an object's respective material culture. Students from non-English speaking backgrounds noticed the quality of their argument changing and their communication becoming more precise, as confirmed by the following quotation: »*This workshop has opened my eyes to the language in language and has taught me to research and question what I think I am seeing. Yes, I have become more critical, more analytical in my thought processes.*«

Having become sensitised through the exposure to a different cultural space made aspects of identity, language and one's point of view seem to coalesce. Importantly, this synthesis has informed students' positions about the work of others as well as about their own approaches to creative practice. This particular outcome is highly interesting and holds value for a number of fields, including Visual Arts and Design education, and could form the basis for further research.

And last but not least, the networks and friendships that have formed during this short time will be valuable for all involved, and a lasting tribute to this project.

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# REFLECTING THE FOREIGN

»For me, the arrival is the moment when all the components of humanity [...] consent to the idea that it is possible to be one and multiple at the same time; that you can be yourself and the Other; that you can be the Same and the Different. When that battle – because it is a battle, not a military but a spiritual one – when that battle is won, a great many accidents in human history will have ended, will be abolished.«

Édouard Glissant



# TELLING THE FOREIGN. THE DESIGNER'S TRAVEL KIT

ANKA FALK

The Travel Kit described here is a tool for design education, developed with the aim of encouraging students to reflect on their cultural background as designers, to support them during their stays in foreign cultural spaces, to articulate these experiences of and reflections upon cultural difference, and to integrate them into their understanding and practice of design. This report summarises the process of developing the instrument and the insights gained thereby.

The key element of the Travel Kit is to get students who spend some time abroad during their studies (be it for research, project work, internship, or study) to keep a journal or diary and put together a documentary record based on their notes. This task is intended to sharpen the experiences and observations of the students and to become aware of how these are influenced by and filtered through their own cultural perspective. The task of documentation is accompanied by a process of briefing and debriefing and is supervised by a lecturer. The Travel Kit defines the student's tasks and provides support as well as a methodological armature. It is a didactic instrument for design education.

The point of departure for developing the Travel Kit were two observations made in design education (specifically, design education at HyperWerk over the last 10 to 15 years): students of design travel and spend time abroad, during which they have fundamental learning experiences that may transform their understanding of design and of themselves. These experiences are usually not taken up in their education. However, such learning experiences may lead, first, to students reflecting more intensely on their experiences and, second, to cultural diversity in design becoming more apparent even to those who did not travel themselves.

So the question is: which didactic instruments, tools and methods can be integrated into design education in order to encourage cultural sensitivity –

in particular making use of students' documentation and their reflections on travel during their study?

## METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURE

The development of the Travel Kit followed a hermeneutic circle: it is based on experiences in design education and observations in coaching and supervision. Prototypes were designed and tested on the basis of this work. Insights gained then flowed into the next set of designs and tests. The prototypes were discussed with students, and their feedback was included.

Running alongside all this was continual research: analysis and evaluation of relevant literature, of exhibitions, of examples from design practice, and of comparable activities in teaching and research at other design universities both at home and abroad.

The development of the Travel Kit can be understood as a generative practice in the way Fuhr and Dauber (2002) describe this as the characteristic of practical development research in education; that is, of a practice that is constantly re-creating itself and thus is able to contribute to research and the formation of theory. Students were able to assist with the modification of the Travel Kit, even making their own designs and individually customised Travel Kits. Researchers were able to adapt the Travel Kit for different occasions and adjust it on the basis of feedback, experience and theoretical research.<sup>1</sup>

Allert and Richter examined how the principles of design research could also be employed in educational research: »*the shaped artefact serves as an instrument of investigation in order to explore a social phenomenon or a learning process more deeply, to*



Travel Kit. © Sedici Verlag 2017

*generate advanced hypotheses and to explain the transformation of knowledge practices.*« (Allert, Heidrun/Richter, Christoph 2011: 1). In this sense, the Travel Kit developed in the project can also be understood as a shaped artefact by means of which culture-related learning should occur in design education. The process followed the process of design-based research as described by Allert and Richter (ibid.) after Reeves. The process can also be understood as practice-led research, that is, as research initiated by (design) practice and conducted by (design) practice: »*The researcher/practitioner is central to the inquiry as is the context in which it is taking place.*« (Malins, Julian/Gray, Carole 1995: 3) In the present case, our position as a researcher is relevant insofar as the development of the Travel Kit is based on our work over many years as a lecturer and coach at HyperWerk. Moreover, the development of this instrument occurred at a time in which we were exposed ourselves to experiences of cultural difference. This enabled a continual re-examination of assumptions, intentions and questions of feasibility through our own experiences both as learner and as teacher.

## ON THE CURRENT STATE OF PRACTICE AT DESIGN SCHOOLS

Study trips are the norm for a number of courses in art and design education.<sup>2</sup> These trips usually have the goal of inspiring students and expanding their cultural frames of reference. Strengthening intercultural competence is another goal. It is also normal to hold intercultural workshops with students of foreign design schools. The most detailed documentation of such a series of workshops as part of a research project was published by Heidkamp (2010). Certainly, many more could be named here.

In all of the approaches described, the students' personal processes of reflection – as far as can be made out – are not accorded any particular significance. We proceed on the assumption that initiatives such as residencies, cooperative workshops, study tours etc. can produce a greater learning effect through the application of a reflexive instrument.

Bosse, Krefß and Schlickau (2011) set out the »*methodological variety in the research of intercultural communication*« in a collection of essays of the same name. This collection did not go into the specifics of design education, and the *Cultural Spaces and Design* project is not exclusively concerned with investigating intercultural communication. Nevertheless, the collection contains a series of interesting examples and experiences in the supervision of students who go abroad. Experiences with journals and questionnaires are discussed. There is also a discussion of why instruments comparable to the Travel Kit, which are supposed to support students during their time abroad as well as serve research purposes, fail: when they are too ambitious or complicated they are not used because they are seen as an additional burden rather than a support in an already demanding new situation. The Travel Kit took all this into consideration: the set of tasks in particular is manageable, and although it contains suggestions it also provides students with flexibility in the areas of methodology, content, choice of media, and design.

A familiar problem with the now widespread and popular semester abroad is the fact that, although students swap countries, they often do not swap the milieu in which they move. Encounters and engagements with the host country are often only superficial and have no impact on the students' self-conception: »*The major barrier appears to be a situation identified in previous research whereby students often find themselves confined in some kind of international student bubble.*« (Shannon, William 2015: 86) This problem was discussed in an expert interview with Will Shannon. (Canberra, May 2014) A doctoral candidate at the time, Shannon emphasised that an intense engagement with the host country occurs when alongside study a project is pursued which gives rise to a concrete relationship with a life-world and with the inhabitants of the host country. This insight was incorporated into the Travel Kit, in which highly focused, real-world projects or workshops are combined with additional forms of self-reflection.

Griese describes an essential moment in intercultural competence as the »*ability to recognise and accept that human behaviour is generally bound to culture*«. (Griese, Christiane 2010: 168) In a first step it is necessary to be able to recognise patterns of alien culture as such without judging them directly. In addition, it is important to be able to estimate one's own effect on the other culture. Education sessions often attempt to teach cultural sensitivity by communicating cultural standards. This, however, runs the risk of stereotyping and thus of continuing to inscribe those boundaries which really ought to be overcome by the education itself. Griese's description is matched by observations in related seminars of the GIZ.<sup>3</sup>

For Griese, on the other hand, the quality in the process of intercultural learning is measured by the degree to which self-reflection is involved. At the same time, Griese sees precisely this aspect as lacking at universities and in further education and so argues for giving it greater weight. (Griese 2010: 171) In our case, this means: we first aim to reflect, together with the students, on the cultural conditions of design and on our own understanding of design without falling into general cultural categories. Using the Travel Kit as a self-reflexive moment, we also attempt to place a greater emphasis on the neglected aspect of self-reflection.

Material provided for expatriates to develop intercultural competence, overcome stereotypes and encourage self-reflection served as a stimulus for questions in the Travel Kit, but also as a demarcation, since the critical question in the context of education at design schools is: what does appropriate support for design students look like? Aesthetic and design aspects have to be considered as well as methodological ones. Visual thinking and questions of mediality play a greater role here. In addition, specific aspects such as local design cultures, use and production of artefacts, forms of sociality and associated design processes etc. should be considered in order to encourage an approach and a line of enquiry that is design-specific.



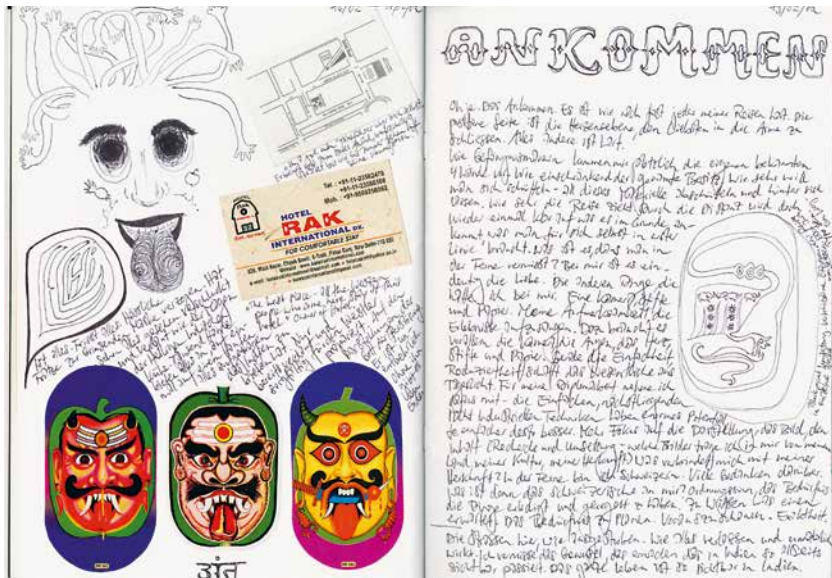
## DESIGN-SPECIFIC FORMS OF THE DIARY

In this context, sketchbooks and diaries have to be mentioned. Designers keep them as a matter of course during their work. Gabriella Trussardi has described how a Designer's Journal is useful in a variety of ways: »It operates as a space for exploration and experimentation, a sketchbook, a research log, a diary for recording lived experiences, and a device for reflection.« (Trussardi, Gabriella 2013: 64) For Trussardi, the diary provides a safe yet experimental place during her research. Sketches can help to document an existing design language or to develop new ideas. (Trussardi 2013: 64-69) New (2005) assembled numerous examples of artists' and designers' diaries which demonstrate an enormous breadth of formal tools and recorded content as well as material on the aesthetics of the note and on the things that are sketched as notes.

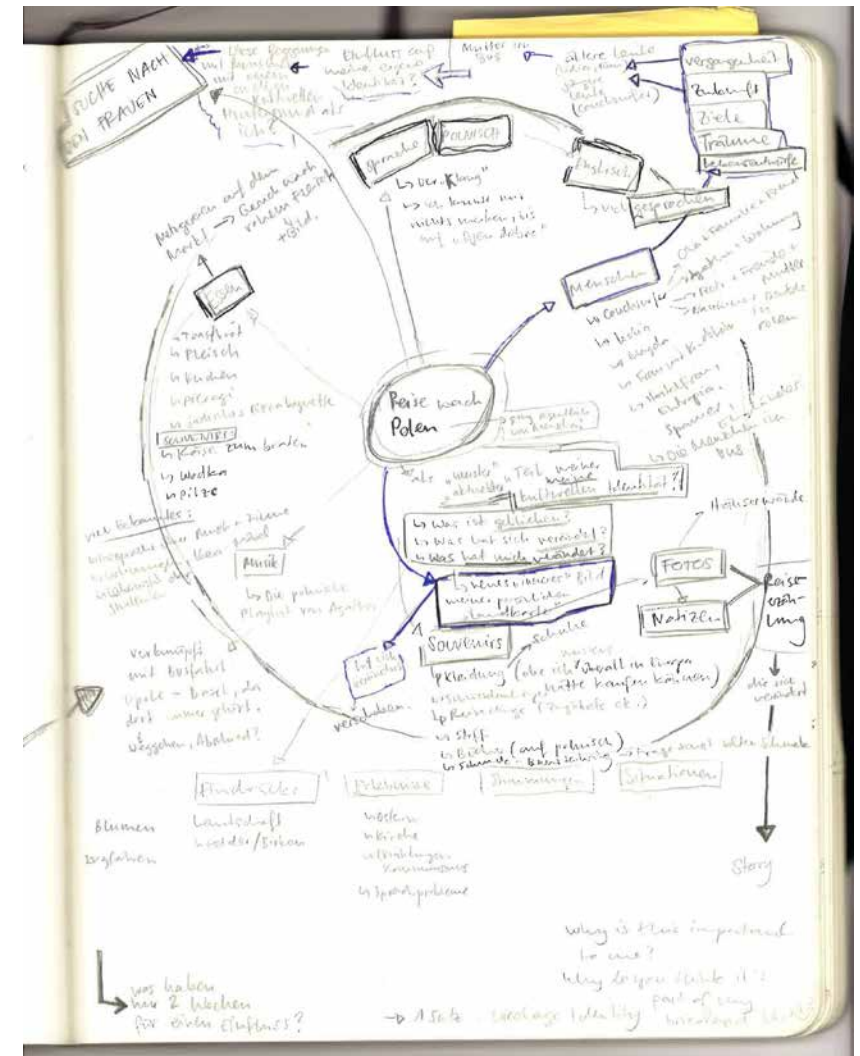
## NOTATIONAL SYSTEMS

When diaries of notes are kept, individual notational systems may be created. The relevance of such notational systems (as they have been developed for dance or music) for information design was described e.g. by Tufte (1990). This means that every student is able, in principle, to develop from the design tools at her disposal her own notation – her own system of signs – for whatever it is she experiences. One need not (only) write – the hand that draws, the recording device, the camera etc. can become instruments of reflection. An important reference point here is also Rudolf Arnheim's text *Visual Thinking* (1969).

In an article on drawing, Manfred Fassler wrote: »Drawing is not an excerpt of the whole but a sketch of the Other.« (Fassler, Manfred 2011) This quotation stresses the fact that taking notes creates another, discrete reality, a »beautiful, second world«



Diary, India. © J. Mehrstens 2011



Diary, Poland. © A. Studer 2012

(ibid.) and is not simply a reproduction. The Other is given shape and in this very act reveals the perspective of the drawer. For the Travel Kit, that meant that we offered free choice of media for journaling.

## AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC AND SELF-REFLEXIVE APPROACHES IN DESIGN

The Travel Kit has a reflexive, and to a certain degree a self-reflexive approach. Depending on the chosen form of notation and the personality of the student, it can take either an ethnographic or an autoethnographic path. In the case of the former, the focus is on external observation while in the latter, one's own experiences are the object of research. Ings (2011) has written a persuasive and inspirational account of the challenges as well as the great potential of autobiographical approaches in design.



If they are well-supervised they can be highly transformative and lead to design results of enormous relevance. (Ings, Welby 2011: 3) They require that the designer develop a personal voice, a distinct position which is won from reflecting upon one's own experiences. In reflection, the personal element is recognised as involved with the cultural<sup>4</sup> and as interacting with it. Paradigmatic for such work is Tatiana Tavares' Master's thesis (2011) for which she followed an autoethnographic approach and transformed her own migration story into a graphic novel.

## PROTOTYPES AND TEST PHASE

Prototypes and adapted versions of the Travel Kit for different use and users were worked out during the project. The necessity of further differentiating the Travel Kit and producing variations was a result of the first project phase (2014-15) as well as of an initial evaluation in a workshop. It became clear that the Travel Kit could serve as a vehicle in education to situate and discuss relevant themes. A deep engagement requires teachers who have been sensitised to these themes; appropriate frameworks and conditions which vary according to the purpose and mode of the course; and, in all likelihood, an introductory session in which the tool is presented along with an in-depth introduction to its methodology and thematic areas. Finally, the first evaluation demonstrated the importance of a wrap-up phase: it is probably not until this de-briefing period that the themes of cultural difference are really engaged with and entered into.

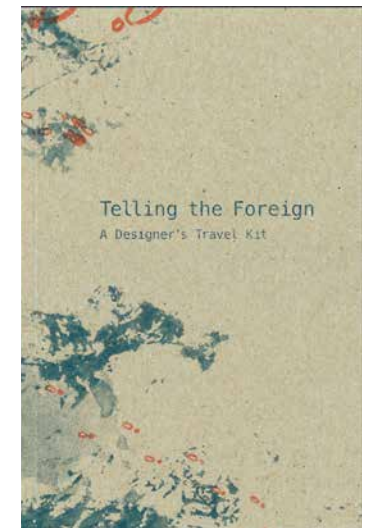
Questions of distance and privacy proved sensitive: is it possible to document experiences when one is still in the middle of them? The problem of privacy lies



Travel Kit prototype. © L. Leuenberger 2016



First Travel Kit booklet.  
Cover by Johanna Mehrtens



Final Travel Kit booklet.  
© Sedici Verlag 2017

in the fact that work based on personal experiences makes the author or designer particularly vulnerable and open to criticism. This can mean that a diary is censored right from the outset or that the journal is not shown to the teacher – something which happened repeatedly but was treated with respect.

In addition to the prototypes and versions, workshops and seminars provided the opportunity of experiencing how the cultural conditions of design can be addressed in education. Here, methods such as artefact analysis were tested, and other thematic areas and approaches were brought to the surface in students' presentations – for example through an investigation into the cultural connotations of colour.

Our observations on the test phase of the Travel Kit in the past few years at HyperWerk can be summarised using a term of the Actor-Network-Theory: the Travel Kit became an *actant* within the institute. As an object it led to a series of reactions within the system: students produced documentations; study trips were undertaken more frequently; the Travel Kit and documentation processes were tested and criticised; projects and discourses were influenced. The instrument had the effect of greatly heightening the awareness of students and teachers towards the cultural aspects of design. Furthermore, they came to appreciate cultural spaces and international experiences as themes within their education.

## CONSEQUENCES FROM THE TEST PHASE

The test phase allowed to define criteria that the Travel Kit had to fulfill in order to be successful in an educational setting. It allowed a deeper understanding of where the Travel Kit as a didactic instrument is situated. And finally, it allowed to summarise the different approaches and emphases of students in six thematic fields.

## CRITERIA FOR THE TRAVEL KIT

Based on experiences with previous prototypes the following criteria were established:

- The various approaches to the themes of the cultural aspects of design and the different methodologies, points of departure, processes and thematic focuses all need to be taken into consideration and must not be simplified in the service of a narrowly defined set of requirements.
- The theoretical complexity of the topic also needs to be accounted for.
- Nevertheless, a clear definition of the set of requirements is needed in order to make the instrument at all serviceable.
- The purpose of the Travel Kit is to provide a framework, to broaden awareness, and to open perception.
- It must enable international experiences that have been documented and reflected upon to be recognised as a course achievement. This requires a modification of the course regulations.
- The necessary task requirements and student achievements must be realistic, practical and able to be integrated into the daily routines of teachers and students.
- Preparation and wrap-up are indispensable parts of the process.
- Accompanying supervision is crucial.

## THE TRAVEL KIT AS A DIDACTIC-METHODOLOGICAL INSTRUMENT

The core of the Travel Kit is the journal as a place of reflection. What ought to be noted in this journal was a matter of repeated discussion during the project: personal comments seemed irrelevant, but neither was it to be a pure design diary. Moreover, what is »cultural« is difficult to grasp since observations often swing between the personal and the cultural. At the same time, we wanted to strengthen the students as (future) professionals who realise that the professional is based on cultural assumptions and agreements.

The journal is situated somewhere between the personal, the cultural, and the professional. Depending on the individual's personality one of these areas will be more strongly emphasised, and this can be taken up in coaching or supervision. Journaling provides a space for negotiating how the personal, the cultural, and the professional all relate to each other:

*The personal and the cultural:* The opportunities for cultural diversity in design are inextricably linked to an understanding of how one's own perspective is always shaped by culture. The cultural and the personal, however, cannot be clearly distinguished – rather, they are interwoven in complex ways. Here, methods of self-reflection and autoethnography are valuable. In terms of autoethnographic research, Ellis and Bochner speak of complex layers of consciousness which combine the personal and the cultural. (Ellis, Carolyn/Bochner, Art 2000: 739)

*The cultural and the professional:* Cultural patterns and cultural configurations stamp their mark not just on our personal values but also on our professional

understanding of design. The problems and needs towards which design bends; the aesthetics, methods and approaches of design; the forms of communication etc. are all based on cultural patterns that are generally unconscious. Blankenship (2005) speaks of cultural self-consciousness through consciousness of one's own culture or the local culture.

*The professional and the personal:* For a globally sustainable and responsible design it is necessary that personal and professional values are not separated. Wood (quoted after Ings 2011) emphasises that in a world of increasing environmental destruction, designers can no longer disavow their personal views in order to satisfy a client. Alongside ecological processes of transformation, particularly climate change, it would also be necessary to reference limited resources as well as the issue of future ways of life that encourage the preservation of biological as well as cultural diversity. To grasp globalisation as a task of design means that designers are challenged to take on responsibility. A self-reflexive approach therefore promises much for being able to generate relevant design results, encourage reflection, and train responsible designers. The Travel Kit is intended to contribute to these aims.

## THEMATIC AREAS

Proceeding from student projects, documentations and diaries and a whole range of workshops and seminars but also from reference projects in art and design as well as from literature research, the different ways of exploring the cultural essence of design as well as the culture-bound perspective can be summarised and structured in six thematic fields. These fields helped to create a revised Travel Kit, as described later. Accordingly, one can explore

- cultural spaces
- material culture
- the Other
- oneself
- interaction
- documentation

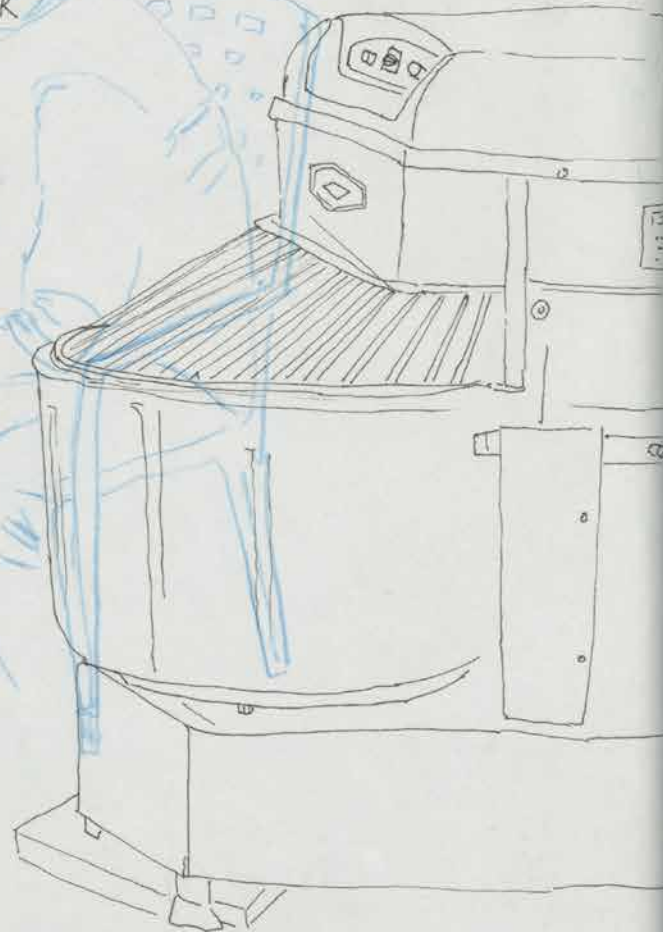
## EXPLORING CULTURAL SPACES

As is evident from the name, this thematic field is about the investigation of space using methods of ethnography and visual anthropology, such as participating observation. This involves the observation of behaviour and forms of social relations, local practices, and the use of public space etc. but also the visual and sensual comprehension of space itself. Related to this are the practices of the Situationists and of Lucius Burckhardt's *strollology*. Hofstede's dimensions of culture may also be relevant here. It needs to be stated that one does not proceed here from an idea of homogeneous cultures but from a selected space of investigation which can be perceived in its originality, hybridity etc.

## Chin - Chin

- 1kg FLOUR
- 200gr SUGAR
- a pinch of SALT
- 1 EGG
- 1TL MILK (POWDER)
- 100gr BUTTER
- 3TL BAKING POWDER
- 2dl WATER
- 1TL VANILLA POWDER

« PEOPLE CAN BRING THEIR INGREDIENTS AND WE MIX THEM. ONE SACK OF FLOUR COSTS 2'000 NAIRA »



« EITHER IT'S MONEY - OR YOU KNOW SOMEONE - OTHERWISE YOUR CERTIFICATE DOESN'T HELP YOU ANYTHING IN FINDING A JOB »



## Cookies

- 1KG FLOUR
- 300gr SUGAR
- a pinch of SALT
- 1TL BAKING POWDER
- 300gr BUTTER
- 3 EGGS
- 50gr COCONUT FLOCKEN

GOODNESS \* YAKS - THE CHIEF BAKERS  
27 years      20/28 years



## EXPLORING MATERIAL CULTURE

The focus here is on things, objects and artefacts and on materiality, production and use. The references here are to the relevant literature on material culture as well as on design methods such as artefact analysis. Resources and their origins may be relevant here, e.g. the question of what things are made from and where the raw materials are obtained. Aesthetics as well as narratives and values that are inscribed in things belong here as well.

## EXPLORING THE OTHER

Exploring the Other can almost be understood as the archetypal problem of anthropology. It is about projections, stereotypes, the exotic, clichés, and othering, as well as about all the enquiries into and experiences with what is foreign. It involves the perception of what is perceived as foreign, which is why this theme is closely related to the next:

## EXPLORING THE SELF

This theme covers issues of self-reflection, with one's own identity as the point of departure for researching. Methodologically relevant here are e.g. autoethnography and heuristics but also models of cultural identity.

## EXPLORING INTERACTION

Under this heading we encounter the classic themes of intercultural communication, but also questions of translation. Cooperation is also an important theme here, for example in Richard Sennett's distinction between simple and complex cooperation. Homi K. Bhabha's concept of a *third space* can also be related to this thematic field.

## EXPLORING DOCUMENTATION

This theme is concerned with forms of documentation and notation. What am I noting? How do I note? Here, it is a question of storytelling, of narrative, of the problem of translating into different sign systems (even beyond language).

## THREE COMPONENTS OF THE TRAVEL KIT

On the basis of the preceding remarks, the revised Travel Kit consists of three components:

1. A set of instructions, *How to Travel*, which are to be integrated into the course requirements and which prescribe how to deal with the international stays of students so that they can be recognised as a student achievement.
2. A small booklet, *Telling the Foreign. The Designer's Travel Kit*, which functions as a handbook for the jacket pocket or travel bag and provides, in highly compressed form, the various approaches and issues involved in note-taking and observation.

3. A blog called *Travelogue* which is integrated into the project's website and offers the additional information necessary for more detailed information.

The following provides a more thorough explanation of all three Travel Kit components.

## TRAVEL KIT PART 1 – DOCUMENTING THE JOURNEY BECOMES PART OF THE COURSE REQUIREMENTS

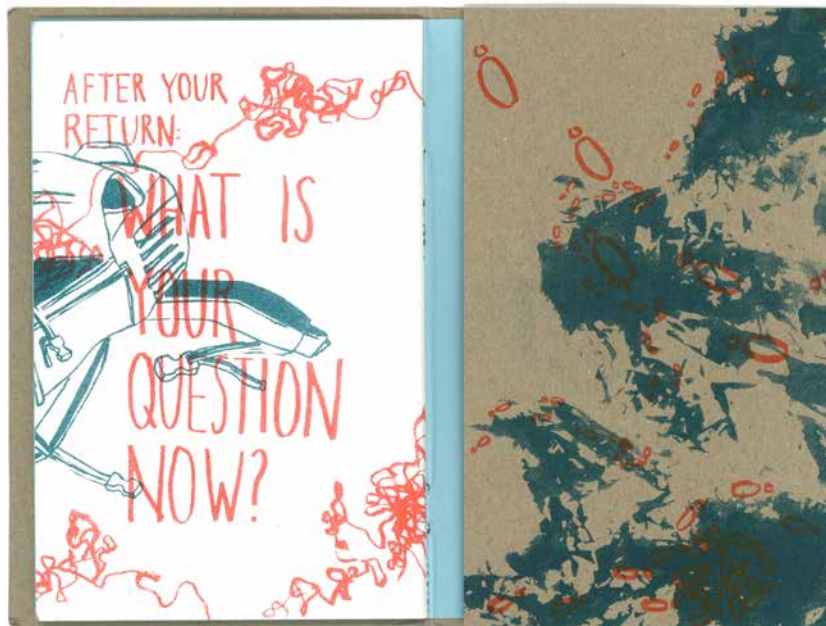
Students' documentations of their travels were produced at HyperWerk before, based on earlier prototypes of the Travel Kit. In these cases, however, the documentation task was strongly linked to certain individuals, i.e. to the *Cultural Spaces* project team members. It is necessary to decouple this requirement from individuals and make it an obligatory requirement for all those students who wish to have an international stay credited to their course of study.

The instructions contain, in short, the following steps:

- When a trip abroad is planned, the student needs to present a letter of motivation to the coach and discuss it with him/her. A research question or project also needs to be established, as does the form of documentation. The meaning and necessity of the trip need to be examined (amongst other reasons because of the carbon footprint). A contact person in the destination country also needs to be named.
- A journal is to be kept during the journey. Research questions or methods can be adapted on site depending on the circumstances.
- The process is guided by a coach.
- After the student has returned, and on the basis of the journal he/she has kept, a final documentation is to be produced, presented and discussed.



Hyderabad project documentation. © L. Oppler, 2016



Travel Kit. ©Sedici Verlag 2017

## TRAVEL KIT PART 2 – BOOKLET »TELLING THE FOREIGN. THE DESIGNER'S TRAVEL KIT«

The purpose of this little booklet is to use questions to inspire, to broaden the mind and trigger new approaches. In addition, the booklet can also function as an *actant*, which can lead to discussions and encounters with the general set of themes, and to action within the institute and beyond (as experienced in our case). In this way, the theme is endowed with a material presence; there is an object that is able to wander from hand to hand. The booklet does not provide academic reading in the usual sense. The aim was to provide something more sensual than a reading list and to give the object haptic and aesthetic qualities to make it more attractive for design students. The booklet is less for reading than for leafing through and perhaps dwelling on a particular topic. It consists of questions only, organized along the six thematic fields described above.

## TRAVEL KIT PART 3 – TRAVELOGUE

The blog *Travelogue*, which is integrated into the project website (<http://cultural-spacesanddesign.net/travelogue>), offers more detailed information. Since it is a forum for student projects as well as for references to literature, other relevant work and examples of design, it allows for easy access to existing research. Moreover, it addresses a generally interested readership beyond the boundaries of the university, and this is the reason why the blog contains articles in English as well as in German. By adding the blog, we could skip the problem of oversimplifying a complex topic in just a few questions. The blog also allows us to address lecturers and students through one medium.

## CONCLUSION

As a didactic instrument, the Travel Kit was trialled over the course of the project in various forms. It was integrated into the educational practice at HyperWerk. The Travel Kit enables not just students but also teachers to gain an appreciation of the experiences of cultural difference in education. Together, they ought to reflect on the cultural conditions of their own understanding of design. Influenced or triggered by this tool, numerous design projects and processes have emerged<sup>5</sup> which provide evidence of such reflection processes. The tool therefore seems to meet expectations. However, further development in the sense of a generative practice is possible and desirable.

## NOTES

1. Adjusted versions of the Travel Kit were used in the *International Workshops* described in this volume, in which individual journaling and documentation were obligatory.
2. At the HGK Basel, for example, in the Institute Fashion Design; for teachers of art and design; HyperWerk. Cf e.g.: Siegwolf, Martina: *What remains – von Orten und Begegnungen in Budapest*. (What remains – of places and encounters in Budapest.) In: Kirsten M. Langkilde (ed.). (2013). *Verortung. (Situating.)*. – See also: documentations

from HyperWerk study trips: <http://gemeinschaft.hyperwerk.ch/studienreise/> <http://www.enterviewsoncrisis.org/workshops.html>

3. German Society for international Cooperation (GIZ). <https://www.giz.de/de/html/index.html>
4. Here, the cultural refers to the »subtle and taken-for-granted patterns that shape our thinking and acting« (Shaules 2015, X) and are rooted in the cultural spaces we are more deeply engaged with on an internal or external level.
5. See in this volume for example the work of Anna Studer, Lea Leuenberger, Manuel Wüst, Gabriel Meisel, Nora Fankhauser, and Franziska Schüpbach.

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## ON BEING ON THE MOVE

### LEA LEUENBERGER

I collect things. I love details. I combine. I observe. I watch. I go into depth, I question. I broaden my horizons, I digress. I take my time.

Which time?

Our concept of time is linear, we think of it as a time line, as a linear succession of years, months and days.

When I travel abroad it is not just my daily routine that gets shunted out of place, I also enter into another idea of time. The concept and perception of time are subject to cultural codes and vary from region to region. I have experienced this in a very direct way on my travels. In Iceland, for example, they practise two completely different lifestyles depending on whether it is winter or summer. In India, as in other Far Eastern cultures and religions, the concept of time is instead circular.

We are able to distinguish between external and internal time, between linear and cyclical time, between chronometric and aesthetic time. Greek mythology tells of *chronos* and *kairos*. *Chronos* stands for logical, rational, measurable time. It's for this that we wear watches, so we keep to its beat and to its structure. Its counterpart is *kairos* which stands for the proper – but not predictable – moment. Its measure is internal time, the time of perception. Of athletic build, with wings on his back and his feet, *kairos* seizes the right moment like lightning. His hair is limited to one large, glossy curl as an allegory of the proverb »to take time by the forelock«.

I have decided to take my time, to stretch it, to free it from its metric corset. I am focusing on the meantime, on that kind of time we would all like to save ourselves: the time of being on the move.

Daydreaming is a gift.

### ON THE MOVE WITH THE TRAVEL KIT

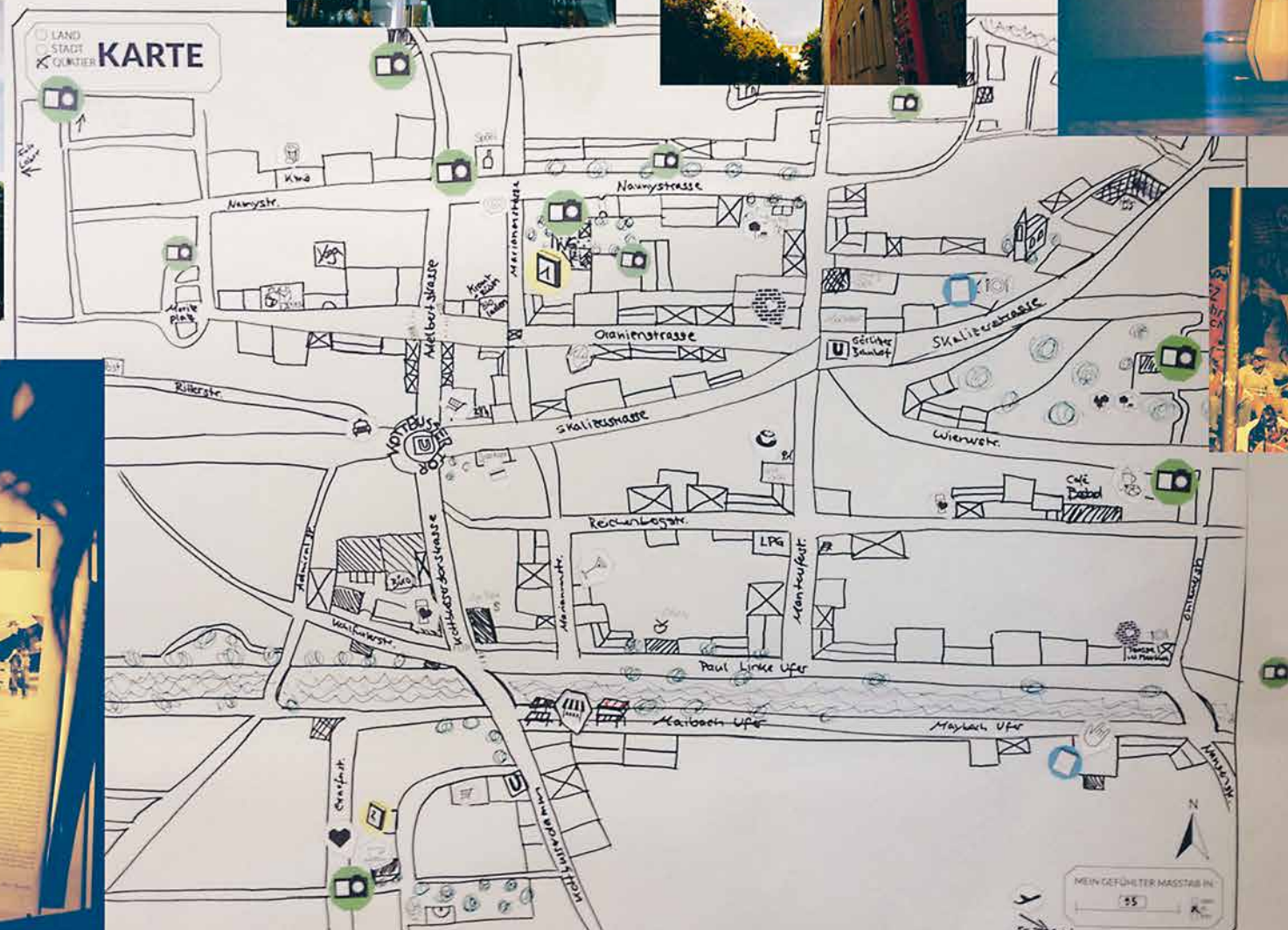
I am on the move, observing, attentive to the incidental. I watch but do not intervene. Without a travel guide or map, I set out without a plan – but not without a goal. The design process begins, but I don't know what will come out of it. I provoke the accidental by not researching places in advance. I do not linger on the fixed path of a preconceived plan. This intuitively guided search requires courage and blind faith in the principle of serendipity. Experiences, the things one has learned and the skills one has acquired – all converge in the knack of reacting to the moment. When I am on the move it is precisely these moments I am after in which one »takes time by the forelock«, and with my analogue camera I take shots of moments which then immediately vanish.

Alertness, concentration, a drive to discover, childlike curiosity – these mental states are the methodological conditions for my work and they are what my Travel Kit is equipped for: a set of items for documenting my travels consisting of an analogue camera, a recording device, a logbook, various sample bags, a pen and an unmarked city or country map. They are tools with which different forms of being on the move can be captured – on journeys, walks or outings.

»How do I archive my own experiences?« was a question that originally provided the motivation for developing my own Travel Kit. While I'm on the move my attentiveness and receptiveness are stimulated and heightened by using the Travel Kit so that I am able to perceive my surroundings and internalise my experiences more consciously.



The suitcase packed with camera, logbook and the photo-gallery »Zeit« (»Time«).  
© L. Leuenberger, 2016



A collage of the map of the Kreuzberg district in Berlin with hand-drawn map and analogue photographs. © L. Leuenberger, 2015



## PERCEPTION IN 36 IMAGES

At first only intended for documentary purposes, the analogue camera became the most important design tool in the Travel Kit.

Analogue photography requires an awareness for the process by which an image is made, and for me it provides a strong statement on the subject of perceiving time. Using this technology I deliberately reduce perceptions and impressions to 36 images. The attentiveness and care required by analogue photography demands my entire concentration. When I look through the viewer I have to decide on a particular moment. Space and time therefore both become process elements of the aesthetic in my work: between the picture and its visibility some fundamental steps are necessary.

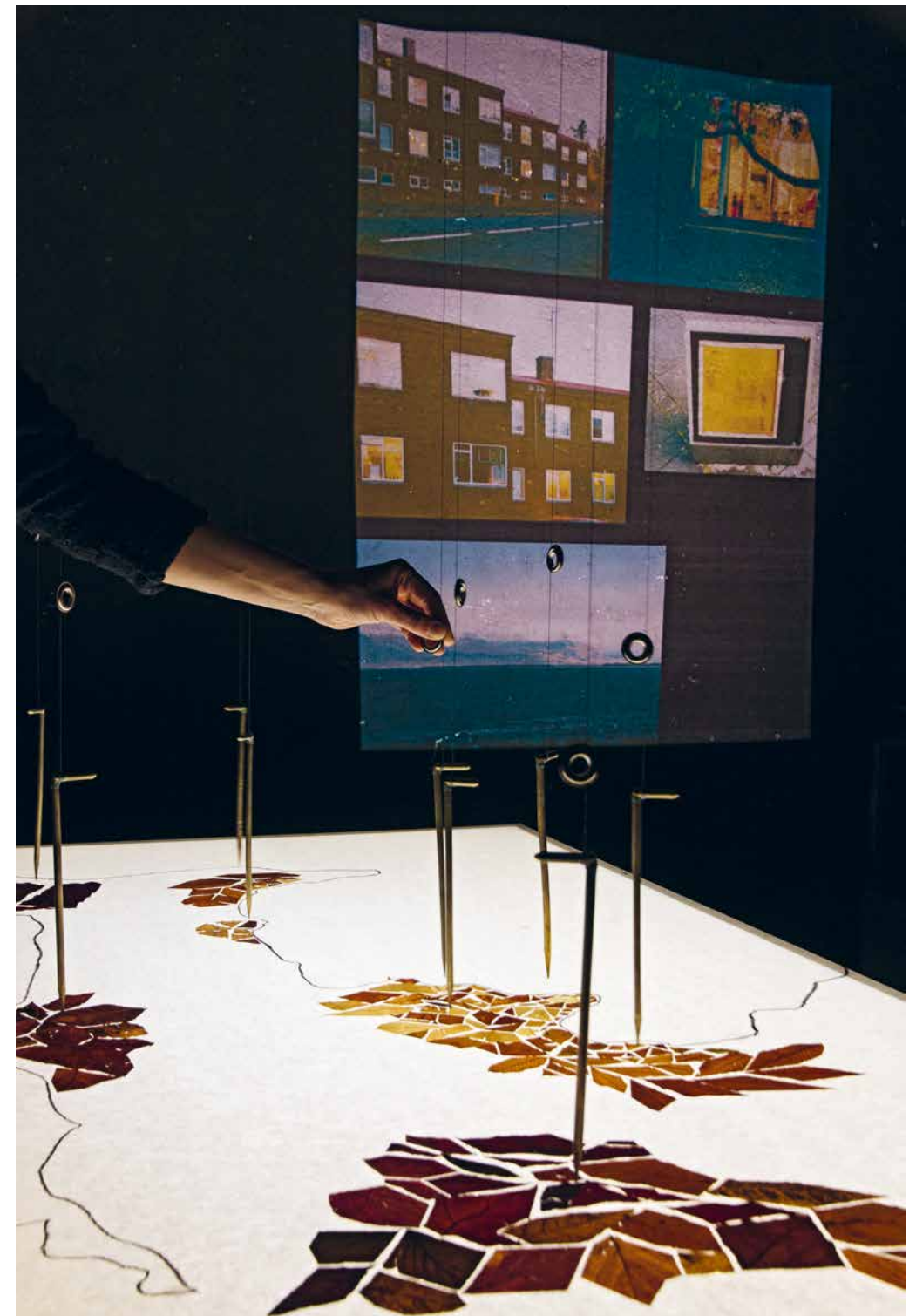
Back from my explorations – generally only after a while once impressions have settled and the digestion phase has started – I sort through the material. Photographs, sound recordings, notes. I jot down the experiences and encounters I've had, and the acquaintanceships I've made. Only then do I research the region I've travelled in, its culture(s), and the interesting facts I've learned while on the move.

In a further step, I connect the fragmentary moments to each other again and develop different formats from them: from a multimedia installation with overhead projectors to photobooks to an interactive map on the Web.

The apparent immediacy of digital photography, on the other hand, ignores these aspects and is a little like arriving somewhere after a plane trip. We are not travelling when we are on an aircraft, we're just getting somewhere as fast as possible: it is the instant soup version of being on the move. Home again, we save our thousands of photos to external hard drives, storing our perceptions and experiences in digital memory-prostheses. Glancing quickly without seeing, clicking quickly without perceiving, packing things away thoughtlessly without remembering.

In analogue photography, though, it is not just concentration on the right moment that plays an important role. The time lag between taking the photo and seeing the picture introduces the effect of distance to what was experienced and shows clearly that this picture is *my* picture of *something*. In my photos of India, for example, I could see how much I overlaid my ideas of an aesthetic image on the top of »a reality« (my motif). The chosen framing device – very simple grids with frames – shows my influences clearly, namely my understanding of classic Swiss design.

Even if I always have to force myself to do so, I look for opportunities to show my work, to publicise it, to take it out into the world. I want to put my perspective up for discussion, to show plainly to my audience the dimensions of inner time.



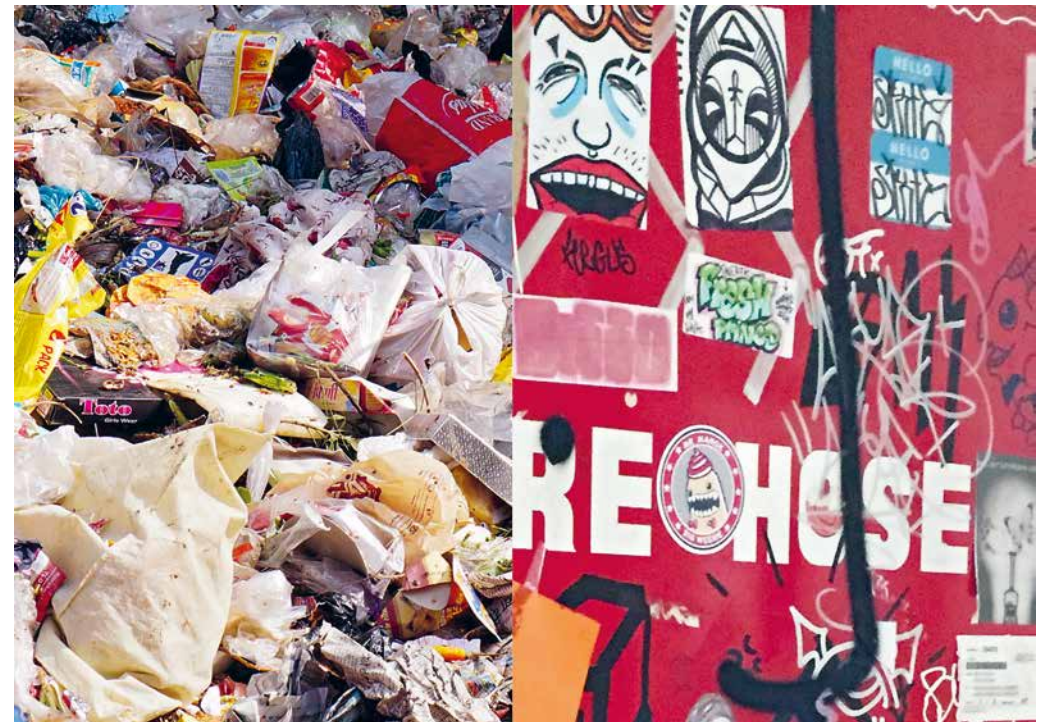
The installation »Journey Mapping Iceland« was especially well received. The interactive exhibit asked visitors to get involved in a playful way. In so doing they immersed in what was on display and experienced a moment of decelerated time. »If I can trigger these kinds of effects and their meaning is understood, then I have achieved my goal.« © L. Leuenberger, 2017



## COLOUR TRAVELOGUE

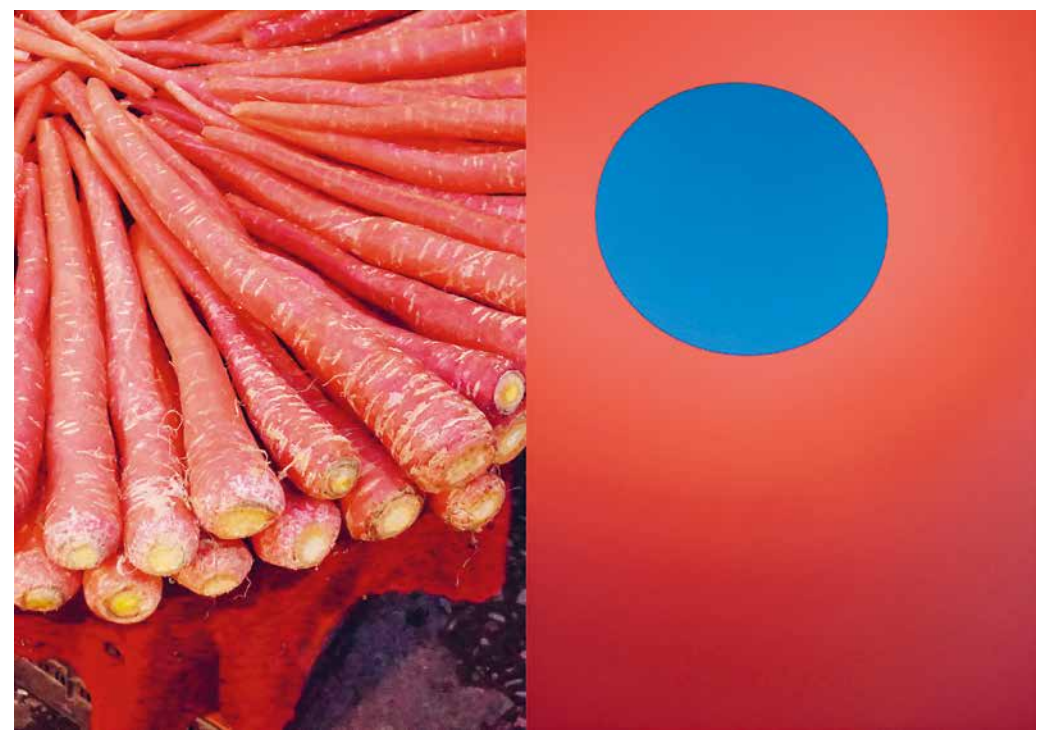
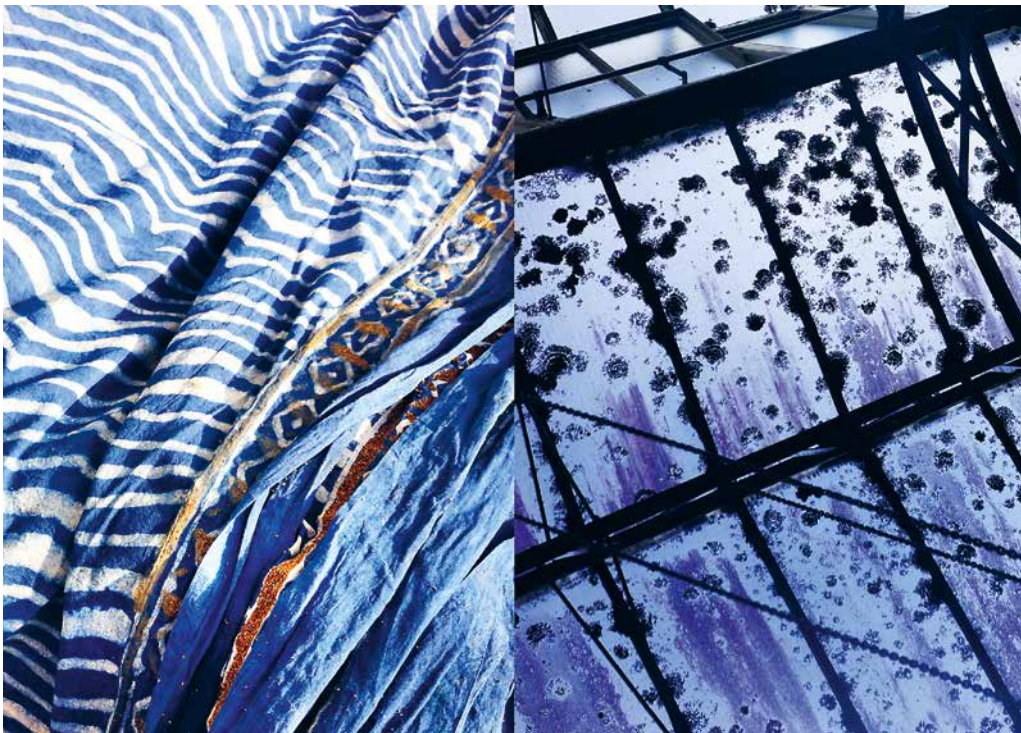
### NORA FANKHAUSER

A colour palette consisting of twelve postcards shows how I convey materiality through images. In each case, there is a picture taken in Rajasthan in India on the left and one from Canberra in Australia on the right. I took these photographs in the course of the research project *Cultural Spaces and Design. Prospects of Design Education* for which I participated in a workshop in each of the two countries. Through the medium of photography, I was able to explore different surfaces and textures. It was my aim to put two pictures taken in different locations yet with similar colouring and aesthetics in relation to each other and evoke a playful tension. The convenient format of the cards invites you to pass them on like a narrative and send them on their journeys.



Selected postcards. ©N. Fankhauser, 2017





Selected postcards. © N. Fankhauser, 2017



# MATELAND

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FRANZISKA SCHÜPBACH

## ILLUSTRATIONS & SOUNDS OF NELSON, NZ

The first thing I heard when I landed at the airport in Nelson and made to walk across the tarmac to the terminal building was someone saying: »*The entrance is over there, mate!*« – »*Thanks, mate!*« I answered, unable to stifle a grin.

Here I was again in the land of »mates«, where a laid-back and relaxed attitude is par for the course and you greet people with a wry grin. I felt at home here from the very first moment.

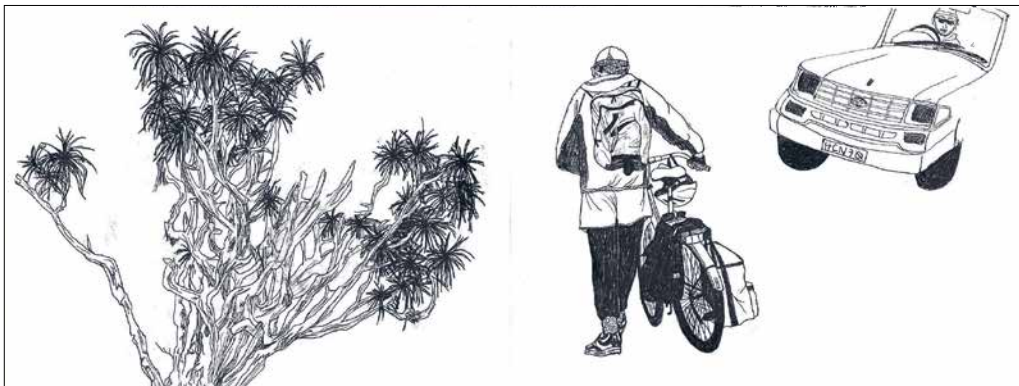
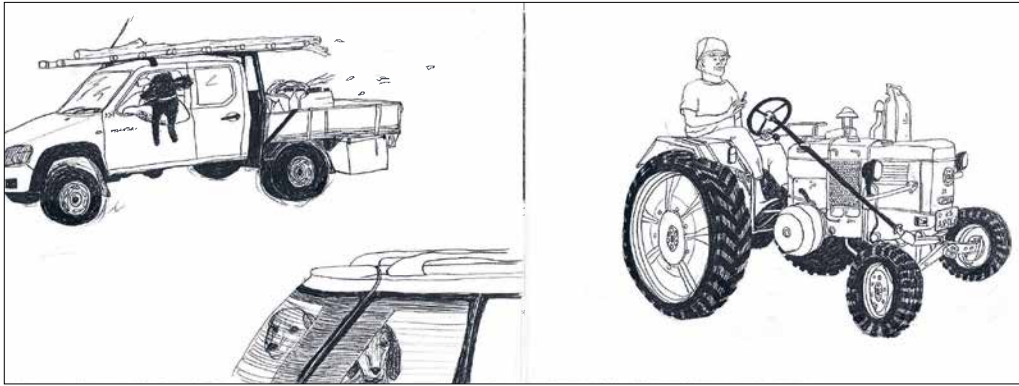
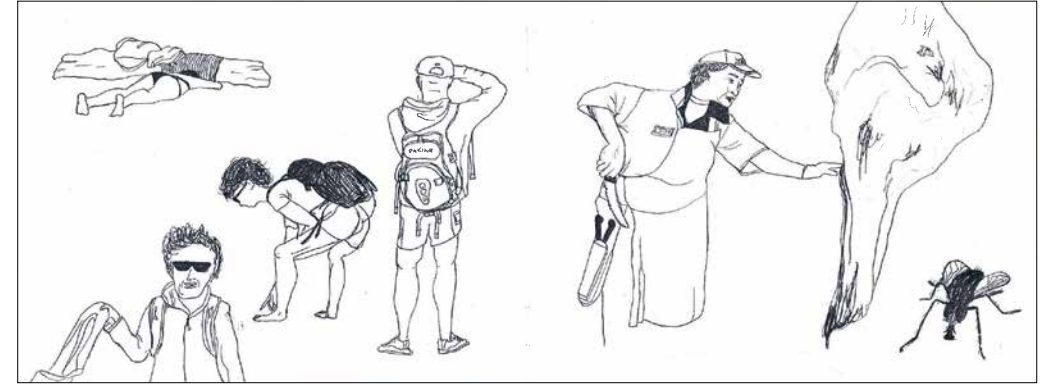
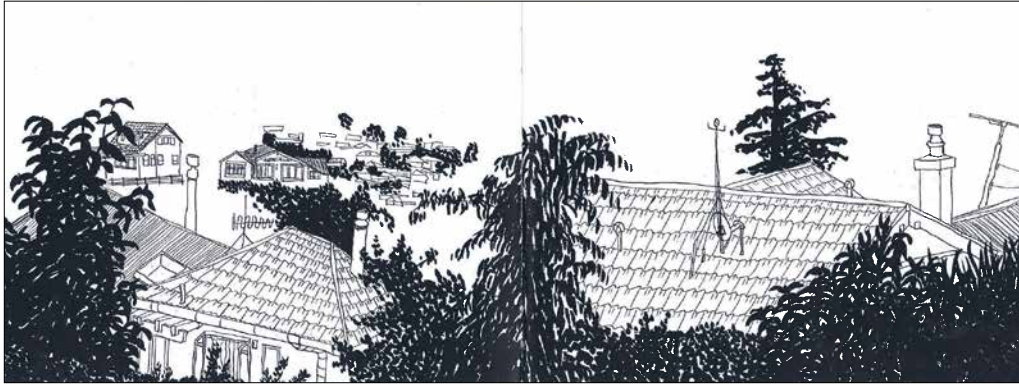
My stay in Nelson, the sunniest city in all of New Zealand, lasted a month. During that time I was often on the move with a sketchbook and pen, drawing people and their surroundings in order to depict the atmosphere I experienced. The resulting publication relates just to Nelson and its environs but some aspects are relevant to New Zealand as a whole.

[www.ziskabachwas.net](http://www.ziskabachwas.net)



Selected illustration. © F. Schüpach alias Ziska Bachwas, 2017





Selected illustrations. © F. Schüpbach alias Ziska Bachwas, 2017

## IMPRESSIONS FROM NIGERIA

### NOEMI SCHEURER

In November 2016 I spent two weeks in Nigeria. It wasn't just memories of all my many remarkable encounters that I brought home, I also had a lot of sketches, several hours of audio recordings from conversations, and photos taken with a smartphone. This material went into two folded brochures in which I talk about my observations and encounters in Nigeria.

### WEDDING GIFTS – WEDDING PRESENTS FOR THE GUESTS

»What about the church members – are they going to be invited?« I ask Rosemary Ganama as she tells me about the preparations for the wedding of her son. »No, they are not invited. They are supposed to come!« was her answer. It is an honour for the bridal couple if a lot of guests come. That is why it is best if whoever is invited brings their family and friends along as well.

And because the families of the bride and groom are happy if a lot of guests turn up, they want to give them a present – a sort of souvenir of the wedding. Personalised objects are popular: towels with the name of the couple embroidered in yellow; teacups with the date of the wedding; carry-bags printed with photos of the bridal pair. Kitchen utensils and household items like plantain slicing sets, toxic-green plastic wine glasses, cushions or lamps with 24-hour batteries lend themselves to this purpose as well.

An average wedding in the Nigerian capital has around a thousand guests, so it is advisable to start putting the gifts together early. While Rosemary Ganama talks and explains things to me, she pulls out a big package from the little storeroom behind the church. The electric lamps arrived just the day before from China. She had ordered 100 of them directly so there was no delivery charge. As I help her to put the lamps back into the storeroom, Rosemary explains that she also keeps the

presents here that she and her husband have received at other weddings. But they've been given so many, they can't use them all. I believe her right away – some presents, wrapped in brightly coloured papers, are still waiting to be opened.



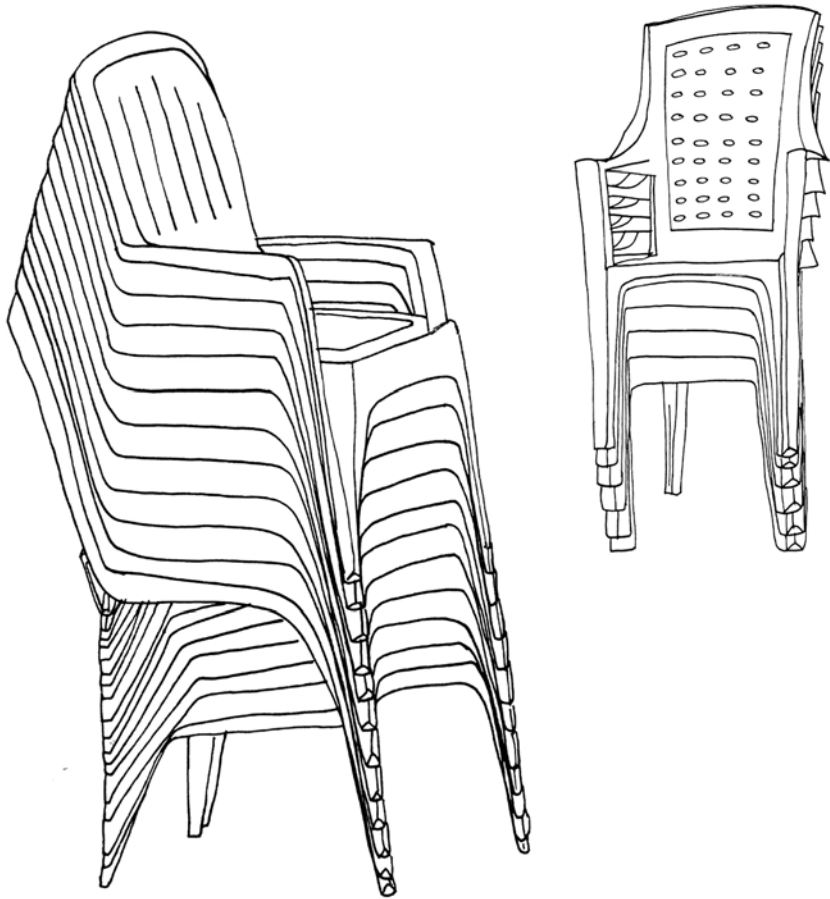
Electric lamp with 24-hour rechargeable battery. Illustration: © N. Scheurer, 2016



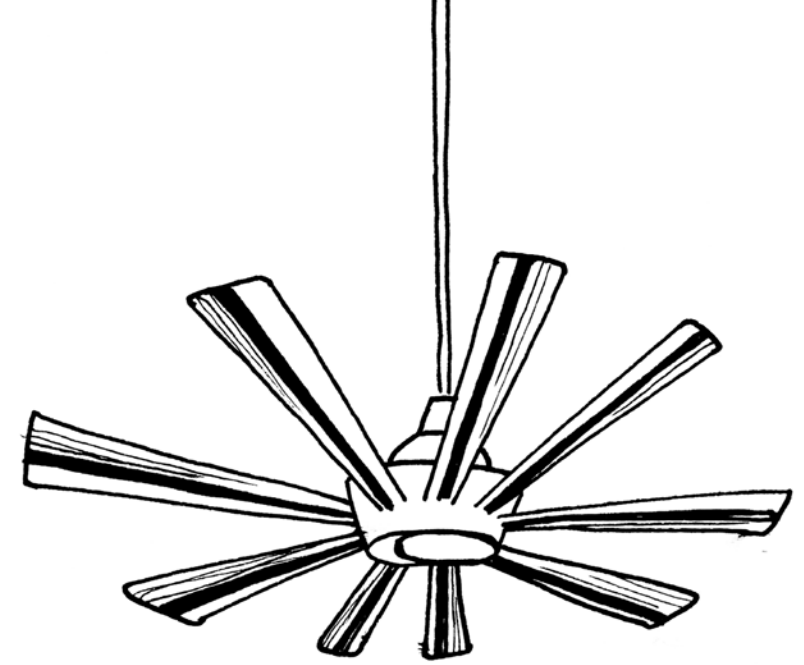
## PLASTIC CHAIRS

With or without armrests, with woven backs or modern hole patterns, worn-out, dusty, almost new and guaranteed always to be in white – plastic chairs are everywhere. They are piled up in their hundreds behind the church, travelling salesmen use them to take a short break at the side of the road, and the guards at the entrances to churches or shopping centres seem to spend most of their day on them.

These flexible seats encourage spontaneous activities like the conversation of women after church services, the waiting of men for their women, the outdoor pop-up Youth Fellowship on a Tuesday afternoon, and, of course, extending the wooden pews in the church when there are not enough seats.



Plastic Chairs. Illustration: © N. Scheurer, 2016



Ventilator or »How to cool down«. Illustration: © N. Scheurer, 2016

# THE CULTURAL SPACES PROJECT AS A PRACTICAL LEARNING RESOURCE

## AMARDEEP SHERGILL

My first introduction to the *Cultural Spaces* project was through letters of motivation that each student from HyperWerk had written before coming to Australian National University (ANU) in April 2016, to join us for the intensive course *Points of View*. The most striking parts of these letters of motivation were the students' need to explore »cultural perspectives and voices« from their own culture(s) and from the culture of the »other«. This inquiry was a good match to ANU's *Points of View* course where we focused on similar topics and developed our individual perspectives through discussions and writing essays. During this time, I researched ideas around objects as portals of information and points of access to the historical past. It was through this new knowledge that I began to engage confidently with themes inspired by my Indian heritage.

Since then, the *Cultural Spaces* project has been an important educational model that inspired the developmental stages of my career as an emerging Australian artist. A major part of my art practice has directly emerged out of the invaluable interactions, discussions, research and travel in relation to the *Cultural Spaces* workshop. The project's conclusive phase, the colloquium *Globalisation is a Design Issue*, has been another highlight for me to build a contextual framework and understand the art making process from multiple viewpoints.

I was inspired by the discussions that took place in Basel 2017 where the emergence of alternative social, historical, personal and political histories was brought to my attention through a diverse range of perspectives from speakers from different countries. My confidence in exploring the themes of my Indian heritage, migration and identity grew as I began to create a series of artworks for a solo exhibition in Canberra in 2017.



Liminal Mindscapes, digital print, AO size. Artwork: © Amardeep Shergill, 2017



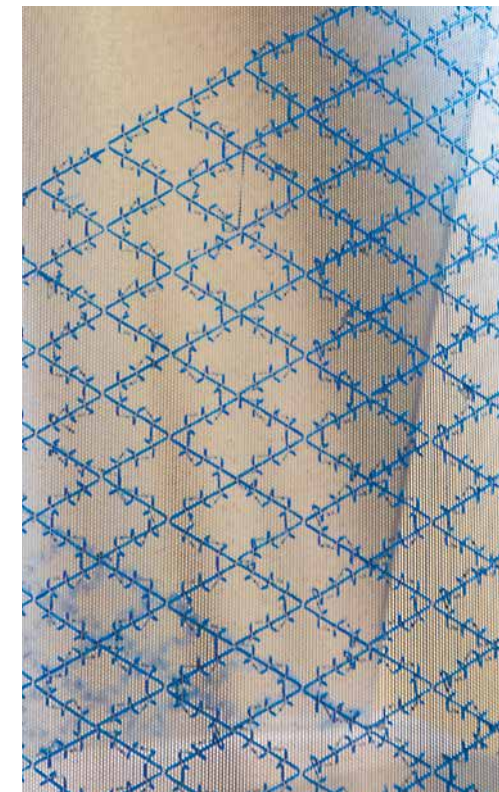
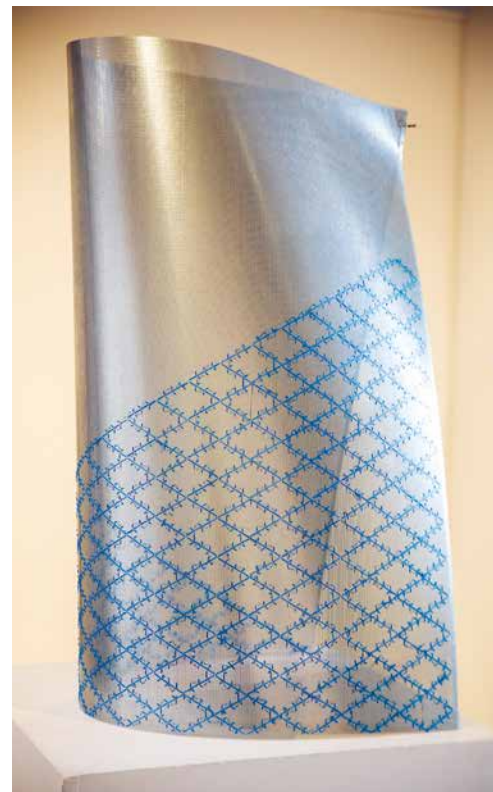
I experimented with digital photomontage techniques and created layers of photographic narratives that explored the idea of the self. These artworks were women-centric and explored the notion of existing in between cultural and spatial environments. Elements were excised from the photographs I had taken over many years and then condensed to construct »liminal« landscapes where everything existed in a dreamlike state. The women that I depicted were deliberately placed in the centre, and their representation was ethnic.

Taking inspiration from the structure of the *Cultural Spaces* project, I began to consider travel and self-led learning as important parts of the development phase of my projects. The structure of the workshop became a highly influential model for me to follow, and I designed my art practice based on similar grounds. In 2018, I created another series of digital photomontages that explored the dreamlike state of being in between Switzerland's and India's landscapes. The perplexing interiors and exteriors within the narratives questioned the sense of familiar and contrasting spatial environments. Through these works, I explored travel as the basis for building practical knowledge.

During the colloquium in June 2017, I also attended the Kaantha embroidery workshop of Professor Himadri Ghosh (Banasthali) which became my first »anthropological dig« into family heritage and craft making as a form of practical knowledge. Kaantha is straight stitch embroidery practiced in the region of West Bengal in India. I discovered during the workshop that traditionally, the old saris from mother, grandmother and great-grandmother were used to create a base cloth on which dreams and



**Kaantha (untitled), DMC thread on fabric.**  
Photograph by A. Shergill, 2017



**Re-interpretation of Dhan Kaur's Phulkari III, Perforated mesh, DMC thread, Fishing wire 73cm x 54cm.**  
Photograph by M. Sidhu, 2018

aspirations are embroidered in a symbolic form. Inspired by the new learnings I decided later to return to Switzerland and start some self-led projects.

I spent five weeks in Solothurn making a Kaantha work where each colourful DMC thread<sup>1</sup> became a representation of a dream or aspiration I held for the future. After moving to Basel, I found second-hand DMC threads<sup>2</sup> at the markets and started the second Kaantha piece at the Bonjour Baby studio. This studio was full of solitude, with periodic interactions with some people who came to see what I was doing and then started to make their own Kaantha. The dreams I depicted in this Kaantha were all related to my artistic career.

The practical knowledge of working with Kaantha embroidery paved the way for me to then explore the craft of Phulkari, which my great-grandmother Dhan Kaur had practiced. *Phulkari*, meaning »flower work«, is a form of embroidery which comes from the Punjab region in both Northern India and Pakistan. *Phulkari* was a widely practiced domestic craft with high social and cultural significance. It also served to reinforce family ties between the generations of women who practised and passed on the craft.

In 2018, I created a series of eleven works that re-interpreted this craft-making connection within my family. It was a deliberate and direct engagement with past

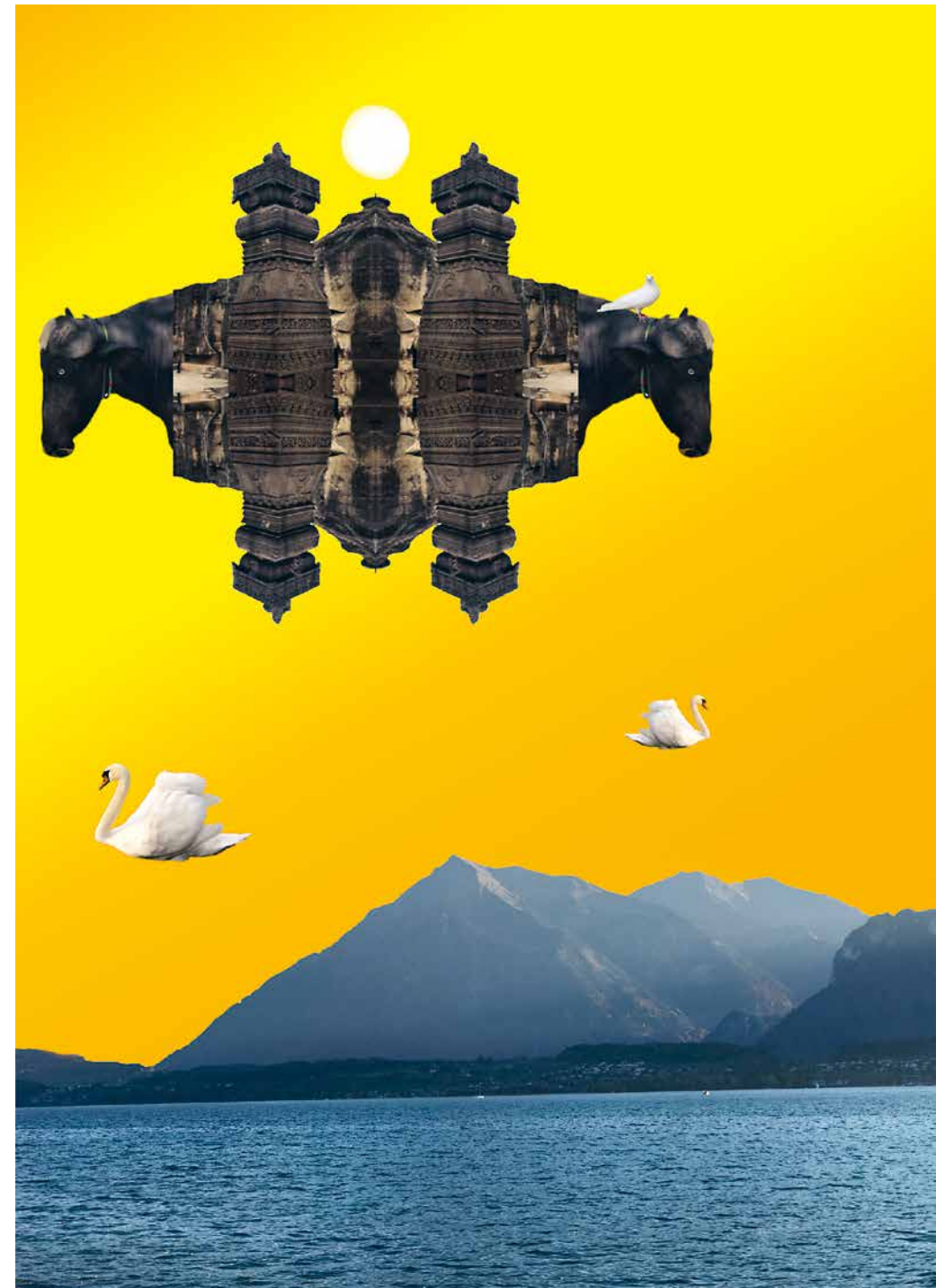
knowledge in order to bring the craft back to life after a generational gap and continue the tradition with new materials.

The *Cultural Spaces* project has had a huge impact on my personal and professional development. The involvement in the project has given me confidence to strengthen my artistic voice and produce works that are meaningful at a personal level.

Moving forward into the future where we face uncertainties beyond our control, I believe in a system of education such as this. It allows individual designers and artists freedom to evolve their practices which are based on practical, theoretical and cultural research. Through this project, I was able to learn from others how to address concerns in a direct and open manner. The *Cultural Spaces* project and the colloquium *Globalisation is a Design Issue* gave me educational research models and tools which have been inspiring me to develop my art projects and practice into what they are today.

#### NOTES

1. Dollfus-Mieg and Company (DMC) is an Alsatian textile company founded in Mulhouse in 1746.
2. When we first learned the Kaantha in Switzerland, we used thread from India which was provided by Professor Ghosh. During my first trip, I brought DMC thread from a craft store in Basel. Coincidentally, on my second trip to Switzerland I found some DMC thread at the local markets and later found the same brand at craft stores in Canberra. Recently, I was given DMC thread by a women's embroidery group. I have therefore made it a deliberate choice to keep using the same brand.



Ellora, 50cm x 70cm, digital print. Artwork: ©Amardeep Shergill, 2018



## BETWEEN THINGS

### ANDRINA STAUFFER

My concern as a designer has been with cultural hybridity. The topic fascinated me because I wanted to understand what new aesthetic formations might emerge out of it.

My engagement with the topic of hybridity was the fertile soil from which the impulse for the design process emerged. Diverse cultural forms, ideas, sounds and smells become untethered from their original context: they encounter one another and intermingle.

I was especially interested in the productive capacity of the hybrid to conceive of borders as transitions, rather than as the means to exclude or delimit. Rather, it is a matter of bringing something forth. The border is an inter-space. Differences and identities are continuously defined anew as part of a process, and in this way new (mixed) forms emerge again and again.

My Bachelor's thesis set out to focus on questions related to this topic. For that reason I took part in all three international workshops in the project *Cultural Spaces and Design*. I was, therefore, in India/Banasthali, in Botswana/Gaborone, and finally in Australia/Canberra ... and all that inside half a year! It was clear from the start that this would be a tough schedule.

I aimed to work according to the method of the »participant observer«. Because of that approach and with my camera, notebook, pen (and, of course, computer), as well as an open and alert attitude, I felt well equipped for my first stop – Banasthali. But the world that opened up for me there was overwhelming! I found my feet but I didn't find any answers to my questions. Emotions and experiences rained down on me in a torrent of sensations.

### INDIAN EXPERIENCES

At the outset, therefore, I took a lot of photos. The photographs became an external harddrive, a kind of outsourced memory. Because I had neither quiet periods nor the time for written notes I could reconstruct the mood of fleeting moments at a later time through the photos. Maintaining an archive of images as a reference for experience became a strategy of recapitulating what I had perceived.

After the Indian trip, processing and reflecting on the stored image archive, and connecting moments of insight became crucial tools of understanding for me. It became obvious once again that, in such a short time, I could not adjust my cultural self-image and establish new connections to a place simply by being there.

Moreover, I recognised in Banasthali already that the perception of hybrid cultural forms – because ultimately that was what I was after! – do not reveal themselves by merely looking once. Instead, »looking« itself first had to be sensitised if I wanted to see anything at all.

An example: The young women from my workshop always wore tight-fitting leggings on campus with their traditional khadi. But leggings were also forbidden on campus. I didn't appreciate this gentle form of protest, and the fascination of the students for Western fashion, until I began talking to them. Before that, it appeared to be something quite normal. My perception was tuned to Western wavelengths.

My search for hybrid cultural forms was only possible through direct contact on site and in dialogue with others. But I had to admit that the conversations I needed were not possible in such a short time, and that the process of recording things was, on its own, not an adequate means for dealing with my questions. I therefore searched for a design tool that might be appropriate.

I decided on a haptic object that could make the discussion about concepts tangible and visible. The picnic blanket was born and it became for me the proper format for understanding cultural hybridity in another way and, at the same time, for generating that hybridity. Perhaps this idea came from the Indian custom of sitting on the ground?

### PICNIC AS CULTURAL TECHNIQUE

The picnic has a long cultural history. The European nobility of the 18th century picnicked, we are familiar with the picnic as a motif from Impressionist painting, and picnics play a role in films and in literature. It can take place anywhere: on a river bank, in a field, in the forest, on a mountain. The picnic even plays an important role in politics: the first cracks in the Iron Curtain were caused by a picnic. When the Hungarian border at Sopron was opened for a picnic in the summer of 1989 hundreds of GDR citizens heard about it and seized the moment. The consequences of that are now well known.

The picnic blanket is, however, difficult to contextualise explicitly, either historically or culturally. Situated somewhere between an everyday item, a craft object and an artwork it appears in a variety of materials in all cultures.



Picnic in Basel, Switzerland. Photograph by A. Stauffer, 2016

The concept of the picnic captivated me through its agility and simplicity. It roams freely and is possible everywhere. It acquires space but only for so long as it is needed. In its random choice of a location offering less comfort than a dining room, it breaks with the rules. The picnic means freedom by escaping from the everyday.

The picnic blanket performs in an empty place. Suddenly there is a space where none had been before. The picnic blanket becomes a third place, an in-between that invites interaction. It unites people. Everyone who takes part contributes to a common whole. Everyone is both a host and a guest. The picnic knows no pre-determined hierarchy.

There is no reason not to have a picnic. The picnic is like a shoot that bears new blossoms every spring, survives every winter and continues to grow underground. Because what the picnic is and what it brings forth is not always visible.

With my new tool – the picnic blanket – I went on to Botswana and finally to Australia.

### BOTSWANA AND THE »THIRD SPACE«

In the urban environment I experienced a Botswana that is the very embodiment of the hybrid. The rapid growth of the state obviously went hand in hand with a tremendous capacity for absorption: the American cult of the car, gigantic shopping malls, hyped-up Western fashion labels etc. Hybridity itself however is hardly ever a talking point. I settled therefore for a picnic that might open a narrative space for the particular.

After decades as a British protectorate the picnic is very popular in Botswana. As in other places marvellous new situations can arise through spontaneity: it suddenly became clear to us Swiss students that, unlike our Botswanan colleagues, we were unable to sing a song together from our homeland.

This experience showed me an important aspect of the hybrid. The non-simultaneity inherent to cultural developments is shown up at the level of social action: while the tradition of singing together still persists in Botswana despite the pervasive presence of Western modes of consumption, for us students from Switzerland the singing of songs from our homeland is rather odd. More precisely: for us it is »unfashionable«.

### AUSTRALIA – NOTHING IS WHAT IT SEEMS

There was plenty of opportunity to compare notes on hybrid cultural forms because in Australia, too, their existence is barely acknowledged. We were able to explicitly discuss this subject on the basis of an exhibition about life and art in China between 1644 and 1911. The *Trade Paintings* shown there purported to show life in China and were made for export, but they were adjusted by their artists to fit the customers' expectations and projected images of China.

Picnics in Australia are very popular, everyone knows it: picnics as if they were straight out of a picture book!

### EXPERIMENT: ERANOS

In ancient Greece *eranos* meant a meal between friends conducted in a particular atmosphere. My experimental arrangements for a picnic take up this idea.

Back in Switzerland I continued to work on this theme, organised more picnics, and investigated what differences I could introduce by changing the atmosphere and the accessories – a picnic on a traffic island, on an empty parking deck, picnic as performance, a picnic with strangers ... The critical medium was always the picnic blanket on which would appear the one, the other – and the in-between.



Picnic in Melbourne, Australia. Photograph by A. Stauffer, 2016





Picnic in Gaborone, Botswana. Photograph by A. Stauffer, 2016



# PROJECTS ABROAD

»In the world of product design the myths are not (always) woven around the poor farmer, but for example, around the women's collective in the village, which can look back on »an incredible tradition of basketry« (or, as you will, beadwork, pottery or weaving). A host of designers from the North sets out to rescue these threatened handicrafts and they develop products hand-in-hand with African villagers in the course of two-week-long workshops – products that can hold their own in the international design circus. One wonders whether the village women really need help of this kind. And if they do, then there is a follow-up question: are there not already enough designers available on the continent who can do the job at least as well, if not better?«

Amelie Klein



# BUILDING COMMUNITY

LUKAS OPPLER

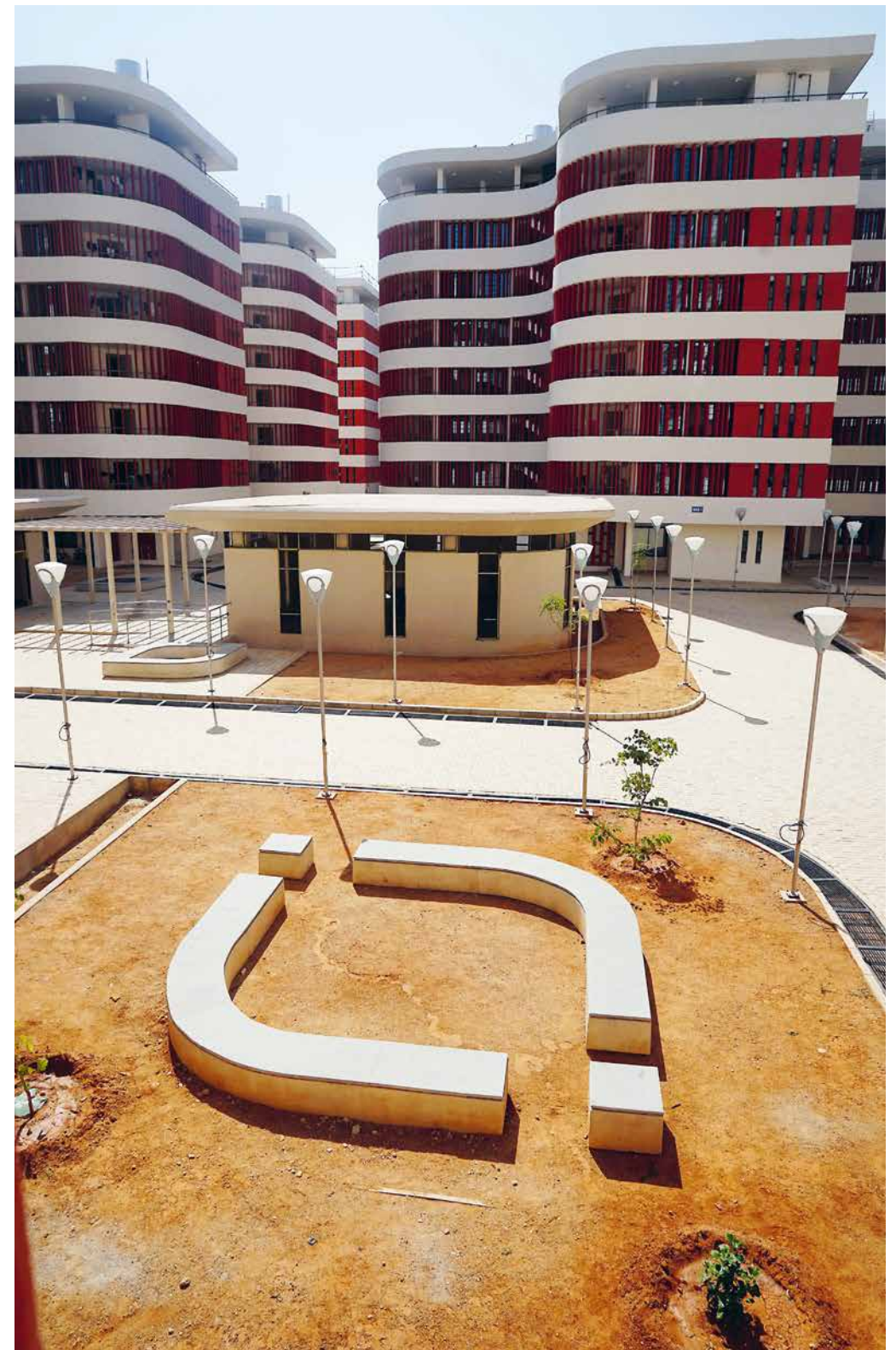
A PROJECT AT THE DEPARTMENT OF DESIGN, INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IIT), HYDERABAD. DIARY NOTES 3-31 MARCH 2016

Thurs 3 March. I walk through the streets of my small Swiss town and photograph my surroundings. More than anything it is clean and quiet – the way I've always known it. The footpath is like the floor in a house. There's a rubbish bin on every corner. Occasionally I meet people doing their shopping. Joseph Theilmann and I are on the way to Zurich airport.

Fri 4 March. We reach Hyderabad at around midday via Muscat, Oman. Anka Falk picks us up at the airport. She is supervising my Diploma project called »Building Community« and has arranged our four-week stay at the IIT. With her personal taxi driver we travel through a hot, sandy landscape to the campus. Assistant Professor Prasad Onkar and a group of students from the Department of Design welcome us. In our rooms we peel our mattresses out of their plastic wrappings. The rooms all look the same.

Sat 5 March. My birthday – but no one knows that. In the morning we look down from the upper floor of our accommodation at the wide, bare surroundings. The campus was only built recently, large areas are still unused. I insert an Indian SIM-card into my phone and begin to organise our first day on WhatsApp.

Mon 7 March. Today at the Design Institute I present the open process flow I developed. »So what you're doing is really Social Design?« a student asks. I answer in the affirmative. We talk about our different communities, about the fact that there are lots of festivals in India which provide social coherence, but that in big cities people still often lead isolated lives – as we know they do in our country, too. A group of people interested in working together forms. They tell us more about the many cultures of India.



An open sitting area and a lot of sun. Photograph by L. Oppler, 2016





Ambreesh and Soham are setting up one of our three Dream-Boxes. Photo L. Oppler, 2016



Joseph and Soham are organising the many wishes and ideas we collected. Photo L. Oppler, 2016

Tues 8 March. Joseph and I search the site for usable materials and tools. Our fellow students have classes. We find some leftover materials from the campus building site such as e.g. off-cuts from metal ventilation pipes.

Wed 9 March. Our first activity comes out of conversations with our small project group: we build Dream-Boxes out of the ventilation pipes. These are a type of letter box which we paint until late into the night. We explain the project in an email to 2000 students, and invite them to post a note with one wish for the community.

Fri 11 March. We are overwhelmed by the hundreds of wishes in our Dream-Boxes, and new questions arise immediately: Which wishes do we want to pick up on? What can we do, and how and where do we do it? How do we make a decision?

Sat 12 March. Of the constructive wishes, the clear leader was the desire for more plants and trees followed by »fewer rules for the women«, shady places, and a community space with different refreshment and eating options, sports equipment and space for social events. The organisation begins. We need spaces, materials, tools we can use, and people to help us find these resources and to work with us.

Tues 15 March. Our ideas are firming up. Sketches are produced, issues discussed, and ideas emerge – and are rejected again. Half of our time in Hyderabad is already over.

Wed 16 March. We complete our final sketches with Rini and Amol and prepare for the crucial meeting with the director of academic affairs. He has to approve our project.

Fri 18 March. Today we go with Rini, Ambreesh and Soham to the director's office. We tell him about our project, show him our budget and the sketches. The director is very friendly and gives us advice. Finally, he approves our small project budget and gives us the go-ahead.

Sat 19 March. Raj, a student in the Design Department, has his birthday today. Our friend Amol buys a cake. In the evening a lot of friends come to the birthday party. Only the birthday boy is missing. Then we see why he has to be dragged in: the cake is not eaten but rubbed into Raj's face. Lucky I hadn't told anybody about my birthday!

Sun 20 March. At the bamboo merchant's in the town of Sangareddy we help to carry six metres long bamboo poles onto a little transport-rickshaw and we travel on its deck back to campus. Thanks to Garima, a design student, we are able to make ourselves understood. The shopping trip was exhausting – we wash our blackened hands.

Mon 21 March. The construction work begins. In order to dig holes for the bamboo poles, we grind two iron stakes to sharp points. On the construction site in the middle of the apartment buildings we put up a sign: »Building Chhaya, join us at 5 p.m.« – Chhaya – that's what our project is now called – is Hindi and means »shade«. Soon the first students come by and ask what we are doing.





Product and new starting point »Chhaya«. Photograph by L. Oppler, 2016





Constructing »Chhaya«. Photograph by L. Oppler, 2016

Sometimes they even join in. »Why don't you have the work done by a labourer? I can get you one who'll only cost 200 INR/day (ca. 2.50 Euros)«, wonders Soori, the campus ambulance driver. I explain to him that it's more fun this way. Soori supports us, and so today we make good progress.

Tues 22 March. Other students spontaneously help us to dig in the 15 thick bamboo posts. Now we can tighten the poles to form arches. The problem: we bought dry, rather brittle bamboo which we can't bend too much. Together we find a solution and lay the bamboo in water to make it more flexible. To reduce the tension still further we tie pairs of bamboo poles together and secure these poles to the thick posts set into the ground. The basic structure is up!

Wed 23 March. Today is the Holi Festival, an important event in India. We mix our own colours together, smear them on our faces and clothes, dance, and throw water and mud at each other until we all end up completely lurid.

Thurs 24 March. We have changed our routine and are now using the cooler morning hours from 8 to 11 a.m. and then from 5 p.m. In between we prepare our material and tools. We relax the tension in the middle of the bamboo structure and just tie together the two opposing poles; in this way we produce a flexible structure into which other split bamboo poles can be »woven«. That takes up the evening. The »bamboo igloo« takes shape and is becoming more and more stable. A core team has formed in the meantime. Soori and Raatsh (a PhD Stu-

dent in material sciences) are there the most. We quickly made good progress and are happy with our successful structure.

Fri 25 March. Building is in progress. Lots of interested people come by. We learn that wet coconut-fibre ropes become tighter as they dry. Lengths of bamboo are split, cut to size, woven in and tied on.

Mon 28 March. We go looking for a container for a drinking water dispenser. At the market stalls along the street we stop amongst the chickens and make enquiries. Finally, we order one from a salesman and give him the first payment.

Tues 29 March. Today we buy plants. After a long drive through various villages we come to a garden shop with many different plants. A green oasis. Our companions help us to make ourselves understood. We choose a number of climbing plants and load up our little *tuk-tuk* with them.

Wed 30 March. Last day. At 6 o'clock in the morning Soori and I set off on his motorbike to buy 50 coconuts for the inauguration. In the meantime Joseph and a few other students plant the creepers. There wasn't enough left for the drinking water dispenser; instead, a student comes in the evening with a little bird-house which we secure directly to the structure. A lot of people turn up. In my short speech I explain that the structure is built with materials and tools from the surroundings. If individual bamboo poles should break, they can be easily replaced. A band plays, then Prasad Onkar saws through a piece of bamboo in a symbolic act (instead of cutting a ribbon). We enjoy the cold coconuts which we open with a Swiss Army knife. Finally, there are a few much-needed showers of rain. We've done it.

Thurs 31 March. Back in Switzerland it's quiet again. Barely any ambient noise. Our houses, streets, railway stations: almost perfect and often empty of people as if they'd all died out. People put up barriers between themselves, live in their own four walls, eat their own food, go to work. I imagine bringing them together so that they forget their garden fences just once, and start exploring their immediate environment to discover and use the community potential of where they live. Public places, gardens, playgrounds, libraries, markets already have this potential. We can influence and shape them ourselves. Taking a step towards our neighbour is sometimes not easy, but despite our differences we can always find common ground, in order to renew familiar places once again.



# TOOLS FOR EMERGENCY HUMANITARIAN AID

## MANUEL WUEST

Since I finished my studies at HyperWerk in 2014 I have focused on what is happening in a global context to ensure that people living in precarious circumstances are not put at further risk. Inspiration for this work was provided by the raw material collectors of Cagayan de Oro on the Philippines – people who, under extremely unhealthy conditions, pick over the rubbish of this metropolis for anything that can be reused just in order to survive. Their conditions – working and living on rubbish heaps – cry out for change. I spent six weeks with them, observing, listening to their stories, and scavenging with them for recyclables. The time I spent in the company of these collectors showed me clearly what it is like for people when they live in degrading conditions. It was a real challenge for me.

These experiences at the landfill led me to consider how design can be used to help improve such situations.

My Master's project at the Institute Integrative Design, Academy of Art and Design HGK FHNW in 2017 provided a first response to this question. In the context of emergency humanitarian aid I wanted to explore the possible parameters of human-centred design in a real-world situation. From the emergency aid organisation *Medair* I learned something about the concrete requirements of people in need and of so-called »Emergency Response Teams«:

## A TOOL FOR CONFLICT ZONES

Conflicts in East Africa lead to people abandoning their homes or hanging on in regions without infrastructure under the most difficult circumstances. In such conflict situations essentials like food, clean drinking water, secure shelter and medical care are lacking. Aid organisations try to relieve this hardship in various ways. In the Shelter and Non-Food Items sector, Emergency Response Teams distribute blankets,



South Sudan. © Medair, 2018

mosquito nets, plastic tarpaulins and cooking utensils. Potentially dangerous tools like machetes and sharp knives cannot be handed out. The risk is too great that such objects might be misused as weapons in any conflict. As a result, people who have lost their tools because they have been forced to flee, or because they have been robbed, cannot be equipped with what they urgently need.

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF »SAFETOOL«

In January 2017 I began preparations for the development of specific tools for people in need in conflict zones. The goal: to help them put up and repair their own shelters with locally available materials – helping people to help themselves. It was intended that this *SafeTool* should not be used as an offensive weapon in violent disputes.

I defined the specific requirements together with *Medair* and their Emergency Response Team for Shelter and Non-Food Items in South Sudan. Because grass and sticks are used to build shelters, the tool had to cut both grass and rope and saw through wood. It should not be able to cut wire because camps are often secured with NATO fencing. Break-ins had to be prevented.

In accordance with these and various other criteria I sketched some illustrations and produced simple prototypes. These formed the basis for discussions in an exchange with experts in emergency humanitarian aid, forensic medicine and botany. Together with the design researcher Dr. Ralf Michel and the industrial designer Patrick Müller, I used these results to create the first functional prototypes. In July



South Sudan. Photograph © Medair, 2018



Prototyping. Photograph by L. Schaffer, 2017

2017 they were distributed and tested in a camp under the UN *Protection of Civilians* mandate in Juba, the capital of South Sudan.

As part of this exercise we put various questions to the experts:

What do conflict-affected South Sudanese think of these new products? Are they usable from their point of view? Would they want to work with them? Do the tools reduce the workload when people are building and repairing their shelters? How do they think the prototypes could be improved?

In parallel with these first field trials in Juba, forensic scientists at the University of Bern assessed the prototypes. Their opinions, and especially the positive reports from South Sudan, encouraged the *Medair* team and us designers to proceed with the project.

Supported by the Institute Integrative Design, and in collaboration with a knife-maker, we optimised the functionality, materials and ergonomics of two new varieties using the suggestions for improvement provided to us:

1. Tool yellow: a light, folding prototype ideally suited for transport together with other humanitarian aid supplies.
2. Tool green: a non-folding prototype – designed from just a few components – which could later be simply manufactured in South Sudan or in a neighbouring country.

In spring 2018 this second generation of 30 prototypes each was tested and comments were provided by various target groups in conflict zones as well as by experts in emergency humanitarian aid in South Sudan. Parallel to this, the Institute for Forensic Medicine at the University of Bern evaluated the prototypes risk potential and compared it with local tools. The interim result showed that the folding tool was largely successful in field trials in South Sudan and in forensic investigations. Size, clasp mechanism, and the shape and arrangement of the saw teeth still needed to



be adjusted. Equipped with this information we sought out a reputable Swiss manufacturer of folding tools, and have since been communicating with their experts. They are ready to complete the development of the *SafeTool* with us and prepare it for implementation in South Sudan.

### AND NOW?

At present we are in discussions with representatives of Shelter and Non-Food Item clusters in South Sudan ([sheltersouthsudan.org](http://sheltersouthsudan.org)). The acquisition and distribution of aid by the various humanitarian organisations active in the country are coordinated through this cluster. The question is: should the *SafeTool* be integrated into the cluster and distributed on a large scale in crisis zones? The prototypes continue to be tested in order to determine that. At the same time, we are trying to clarify how the *SafeTool* might be produced directly in South Sudan in the future.

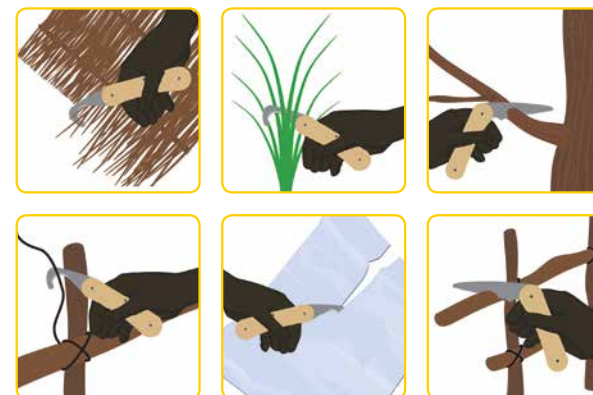
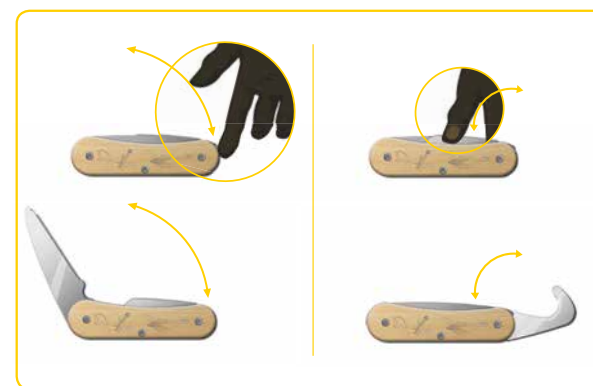


»SafeTool« prototype green. Graphic by P. Müller, 2018

### DESIGN – AN INTERDISCIPLINARY EXERCISE

Developing an efficient and safe tool for and with people in conflict zones is not a task that can be managed by one discipline alone. As a design team we therefore try to involve the greatest number of relevant stakeholders in the design process. In the context of emergency humanitarian aid, design means bringing in expert knowledge, asking a lot of questions, waiting patiently for the answers, developing prototypes, and testing and evaluating them critically to ensure continual improvement. It is a demanding project because different people are involved at different levels with different cultural backgrounds. On the basis of our experiences of the last two and a half years I believe that, with this approach, we as designers can contribute to improving the quality of people's lives.

It is only through usage that design emerges and shows its true value. Put another way: the success of the *SafeTool* will be demonstrated in everyday use. We will only be able to speak of a successful design when these tools have advanced to the point where they can be deployed for each step in the construction and repair of housing, and they reduce the workload of the people affected. If that were to happen in South Sudan, then the *SafeTool* could win the approval of the Global Shelter Cluster and could be used in other similarly situated conflict zones in order to mitigate need. [www.designforone.world](http://www.designforone.world)



»SafeTool« prototype yellow. Graphic by P. Müller, 2018

# SEARCHING FOR LIFE COMMUTERS

ANNA STUDER

For my Bachelor's project at HyperWerk in 2012 I undertook a trip to Poland. It was there that I wanted to continue the search for migrant commuters that I had begun in Switzerland. These women travel back and forth between Switzerland, where they live and work for a while with people in need of care, and Poland, where they often have their own families. They are a kind of life commuters, living in different social contexts and moving back and forth between two realities. For my final-year project I wanted to discover who these women were and what this kind of lifestyle means.

I used design techniques to record my research results and documented them in a written format. I left it open as to what ought to happen with the material I collected.

My working method during the journey was very intuitive but it essentially followed two strands: on the one hand I conducted my research as if I were a journalist. I spoke with a lot of people associated with the commuters and with the commuters themselves. I did interviews and collected audio recordings. I took a lot of photographs and was accompanied occasionally by photographer friends. In addition, I recorded all my experiences and encounters in writing.

The second strand came while writing: I placed myself in the position of the commuters during the journey by using the same means of transport, the bus. I tried to change perspective by asking: how would this twenty-hour bus trip feel if I had to spend the next three months far from my family and home, living in the house of an old person and taking virtually around the clock care of that individual? What would I do during the journey to pass the time? What things would I have in my hand luggage? I imagined I was a migrant commuter myself and in so doing transported myself to a fictitious plane which merged with the documentary. In one paragraph I

would record one of the experiences which caused me feelings of fear and alienation, and in the next I would attempt to describe a situation that might elicit the same sensations in a Polish care worker in Switzerland.

After the journey I produced the publication *Life commuters – Chronology of a search*. It narrates my quest in a form something like that of a travel diary. The publication provides a brief insight into a specific form of economic migration and shows how globalisation processes are realised in personal stories.

Seven years have now passed since that journey. In the meantime I have twice been abroad for a long period and I focused on the way people deal with their travel experiences in my Master's, a project which arose out of my astonishment at how alive my experiences in Poland still are today. My stay there opened up for me a deep, previously unknown pathway into another life-world. Although I have since always tried to travel with a similar sense of curiosity and openness I have not succeeded in attaining the kind of intense and profound experience I had on that two-week trip to Poland. Today, I think there are three reasons why that time left such an impression on me:

First, I embarked with a mission. From the outset of the journey there was a certain pressure. The journey itself was supposed to be the centrepiece of my final-year project and it was an intense research exercise: a clearly defined period of time that was supposed to help generate material from which I could make something later on. The journalist and writer Urs Mannhart whom I interviewed for my Master's said the following: *»If I know when I'm travelling that my experiences and the things I encounter are supposed to lead to a feature, then that gives rise to a certain pressure. It's a good recipe against shyness and reticence.«*

That's exactly how I saw it: it felt as if I were taking on a role – as journalist, researcher, artist or ethnographer – and this role allowed me to act differently than I would in everyday life. My inhibition threshold for doing unusual things, for approaching people and asking direct questions was markedly lower. In addition my perception and attentiveness were heightened: *»If you set out on a mission, you focus more strongly on details and you question everything much more«*, says Andrea Markand, author of the *Stefan Loose Travel Handbooks*.

That's also how it was for me. This intense experience changed my sense of time. It seems to me now as if those experiences and adventures were compressed into two weeks, although they actually took place over a much longer period of time.

The regular process of documenting, which I see as the second reason for the ongoing influence of that time, reinforced this effect. On my travels I was accompanied by the question of the extent to which my own perspective on and ideas about the exotic influenced my perceptions. It was writing in particular that stimulated this process of reflection. It made me think retrospectively about situations which I had otherwise scarcely considered. Moreover, through photography I visually approached a new milieu, a new life-world. Although I proceeded in a rather unstructured way, the constant act of retaining my experiences set in motion a playful, creative yet serious engagement with the commuting migrants and another country.





**Bus journey.** Photograph by A. Studer, 2012

The third reason had to do with the long period of processing everything at home. For almost two months I was again intensely pre-occupied with the trip. I put together an interpretive framework for the collected material, printed photos, attempted to develop a structure and experimented with various forms of design. For a few weeks I wrote. I transcribed the diary entries and interviews and ordered the texts chronologically until a narrative emerged. Maybe the memories which found their way into the publication today cover things which I left out. When I think of the events of the trip I am often not sure if I am remembering an actual experience or the text or image relating to it.

The careful preparation, the processes of documenting and revising have all meant that this journey has a strong and enduring value for me. Individual moments, experiences and encounters have left a deep impression and have become part of who I am. The process of reviewing has proved to be a method which goes beyond the mere description of a journey. I am therefore beginning now to review and document another one of my longer journeys in order to produce a photo publication with short texts based on my travel notes.

Sometimes that feels like playing a game with my memories. I am conscious of how much this time still seems to be present to me too, although in a less tangible form – perhaps because no story resulted from it.

And there is another difference: that the Poland trip was such a seminal experience had a lot to do with the migrant commuters. I have never again been so involved in the everyday lives of strangers nor have I tried so intensively to put myself into someone else's reality. That was my mission, so to speak. This change in perspective expanded my ideas of what another life – under different conditions, in another country – might look like. Suddenly, a precise picture of what was completely foreign became possible and I worked out answers to the question: How would my life feel if I were a Polish migrant commuter?

# RÉN – INSTITUTE FOR THE ANALYSIS OF FLIGHT, BORDERS AND HOPE

## GABRIEL MEISEL

During my studies at the Institute HyperWerk HGK FHNW several fellow students and I, along with refugees and »sans-papiers«, founded the *Zur Bleibe* organisation.<sup>1</sup> The idea was that a gastronomic business would provide regular work and so encourage integration. At the same time we wanted to create a site of cultural exchange. We called our pilot project the *Anational Kitchen for the Spontaneous* and our focus was on immediately effective action.

My Bachelor's project *ré*n – *Institute for Hope, Flight & Border Analyses* (2015) built on these experiences. Now, however, I wanted to take a largely investigative, exploratory and documentary approach. Nevertheless, the intention was still to develop sound, humane strategies for relating to refugees.

*ré*n is a transcription from the Chinese and means »humanity«. But »*ré*n« is also related to the Buddhist proverb »hear no evil, speak no evil, see no evil« symbolised by the three well-known apes. The Institute turned the proverb around, because – following Bruno Latour – we wanted to create awareness and knowledge through confrontation and through understanding a situation. Only in this way can alternatives take shape. Our approach therefore made it a priority to »see the evil, hear the evil and speak of the evil«.

The members of the *Institute for Hope, Flight and Border Analyses* are part of a collective of ideas. Located in the area between art, journalism and the social sciences, and borrowing from the methods of artistic research, we did not want to exploit our investigations for our own artistic or journalistic purposes, to position ourselves as »neutral« scholars, nor to hide behind »objective« facts or statistics. If we wanted to confront the situation of refugees in order to understand them, then that also meant being identifiable as people and incorporating the resulting contradictions into our work.

Our question was: Just how could we, as figures of an alien authority, move amongst refugees? How could we encounter people who find themselves in a humanly, emotionally and economically precarious position? In a situation in which they – in contrast to ourselves – are stigmatised and marginalised as foreigners by political violence?

## IN THE JUNGLES OF CALAIS

At the time of my diploma project nothing had changed in the precarious predicament of refugees – rather, it had deteriorated. The attitude of European countries to them was – and still is – aimless, helpless and heartless. The overcrowded refugee camps of Greece, Italy, Bulgaria, Spain, and in Milan, Foggia, Lampedusa, Kos, Melilla, Ceuta, Calais and elsewhere became places where dreams, hopes and fears were concentrated and walled up in wretched ghettos.

In June 2015 I travelled for a two-week research trip to Calais, accompanied by other members of the Institute: Larissa Lang, Zara Serpi, Gabriel Kiefer (all from HyperWerk) and Benjamin Furrer (a prospective student of literature).

Our focus was on the social and cultural spaces that had developed in the camps and the processes that occurred in them. Through our research we wanted to attain a better understanding of the current situation of refugees and what its implications were. Which methods would be appropriate for researching such spaces?



Institute for the Analysis of Flight, Borders and Hope. Graphics L. Bartulovic, 2015

Institut für  
Hoffnungs-  
Flucht- &  
Grenzanalysen



## TOPOGRAPHY

Calais, a city on the French Opal Coast with just 73 000 inhabitants, has for a long time been a popular transit point for migrants looking to get to Britain »illegally« due to its proximity to the Channel, its ferry connections to Dover, and the presence of the Eurotunnel.

Since April 2015 all the small Jungles – as the camps are called – and squats within the city have been cleared with the exception of three small camps. After that, up to 3000 people lived in tents or home-made wooden and plastic huts in the ghettos outside the city centre in the *Centre Jules Ferry* to the northeast (cleared in 2017).

This Jungle was situated about an hour by foot from the centre, directly by a motorway lined with barbed wire. Water, sewage and other infrastructure were completely inadequate. The aim of the authorities was to have a camp they could control. In spite of that, the camps were dominated by complex though, for us, opaque structures in which ethnic tensions and violent confrontations as well as forced prostitution and trafficking could occur.

The situation produced marginalisation and isolation, and there was no contact with the people of Calais. An Eritrean refugee said: »A jungle wasn't enough, now they want to make a zoo.«

## METHODS

The study of various methodologies (Grounded Theory or Participatory Observation etc.) provides important insights but should not act as a constraint. We formulated two essential points for our approach:

1. Our presence changes the place. We wanted to use that insight methodically to stage situations in which an exchange with people in the camp would be possible. It was a matter of provoking experiences.
2. Our interventions were always to be followed by a self-reflexive processing of experience, including by artistic means. To this end, I made up notebooks for our daily spatial protocols.

## EXPLORATION OF SPACE

We focused on four research spaces in which we wanted to learn more about the situation through interaction:

1. The kitchen as a site of interaction with the themes of eating and hospitality (Zara Serpi and the author). One might also call this method »research at the stovetop«. The goal was to investigate the local situation by cooking and eating. How do people go about getting their food? How do they organise their camp fires? What are their cultural practices? What are their personal views about Calais?
2. Research solidarity: Gabriel Kiefer thought in advance very deeply about his role as researcher. Where was he being passive? Where was he trying actively to change something? As a participating observer he wanted to build a shelter



Aseeda, Shakshuka & Rösti, Place de Norvège. Photograph by G. Meisel, 2015

in two weeks in order to understand better the views, desires, survival strategies and cultures of the refugees.

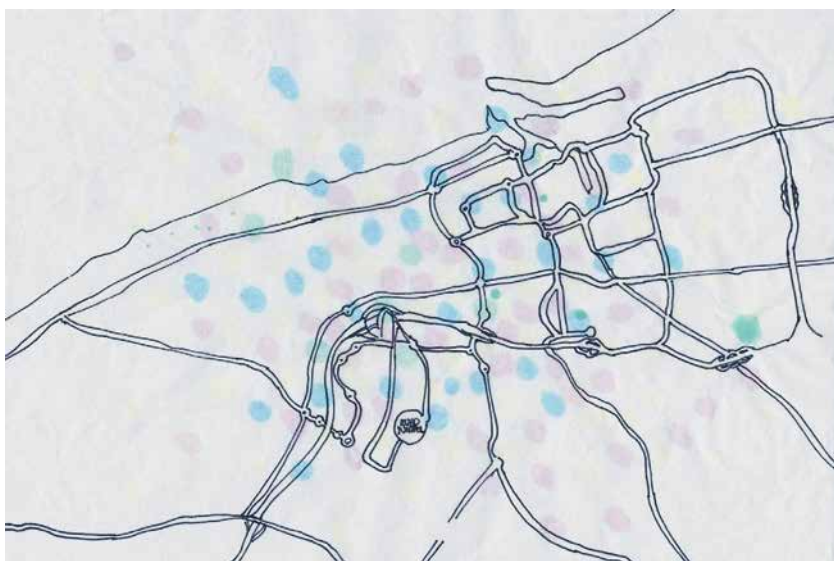
3. Emotional maps: Larissa Lang wanted to find out whether a dialogue was possible when people sketched together. She also looked into the question of whether insights and experiences were reflected upon in sketching.
4. Reflecting on the everyday: Benjamin Furrer decided to take a literary approach to his field work in Calais, analysing and describing the place with its actors and its routines.

## SPATIAL PROTOCOLS

The following provides short extracts from two working journals – which we called *spatial protocols*. They can only convey an impression since a detailed account is not possible here.

### THE TOURIST (BENJAMIN FURRER AND THE AUTHOR)

The place: a ghetto. A space for people who have no space. We are welcomed and given refreshments, we are told about normal lives, normal things, we talk about football. Now and then we are asked why we are really here. I thought I could somehow justify it in an academic way. I have the right to be here, just like you. These thoughts don't correspond to reality. I have the right, but my counterpart doesn't. I am the foreigner, my counterpart is a temporary resident, a paperless, illegal person. [...]



Emotional maps. Illustration L. Lang, 2015

Was I merely a tourist? Were we just tourists who looked around a ghetto and took a few photos? Of course we weren't that in our own eyes. But we who have the choice, and the financial means, to move freely, we who have a red passport, the »golden ticket around the world« – we asked ourselves this question several times a day. The liveliness in the *Baba-Wali* restaurant, named after a top-class Afghan restaurant. The Syrian chef who was always so nice to us and didn't want us to pay for our tea. All the interested people who asked us where we came from, and what on earth we were doing there. The sorrow and grief behind friendly faces was tangible, the bitterness of the situation often masked by an insignificant but pleasant conversation – as it so often is.

### EMOTIONAL MAPS (LARISSA LANG)

Because I was moving in a kind of Babylonian territory which brought together many languages, the image of a map seemed to me to be a suitable medium. To create a sense of orientation, and a basis on which to work, I asked people the simple question: Where do you come from? What route did you take?

This is how the idea of the dot pictures came about. Through the medium of drawing I hoped to make those things visible which had not yet been grasped or illuminated. Each page stood for one station on the way to Calais. Each colour stood for an emotional state... The stronger a feeling, the more dots were to be drawn. In that way, a picture would emerge that conveyed something without words.

I intuitively sought out the people I drew with or whom I tried to draw. I asked people directly whether they wanted to draw with me, and tried as best as I could to explain my idea to them. A few didn't understand what I wanted from them, others were annoyed that I wasn't providing more immediate assistance while still others had the need to communicate and therefore appreciated the platform I provided for them. The difficulty was to find a moment of quiet and concentration. In all, I was able to draw with seven refugees.

### PICTURES WITH DOTS

Salomon, to whom we provided a mattress, was a loud, charismatic man of about 40 and very chatty. You couldn't ignore his anger with the police who refused to intervene in the increasing violence at the Jungle. He felt like a second-class citizen. After introducing him to map drawing I thought it would be possible for him to insert some dots. Salomon became thoughtful. His memories went way back; he had been on the move for seven years. There were moments when he found it difficult to find the right words. Regarding the prison in Libya, for example, about which he didn't want to say a single word. After a discussion of around three hours I said farewell to Salomon. Of all the conversations I had, this was the most moving and among the most difficult.



## REFLECTION

The coloured dots faded very quickly beside the stories of prisons and dead families, the photos of women and children still waiting in war zones for help. In those moments I was more focused on being a humble listener for my conversation partner rather than a member of an institute carrying out research. Leading these conversations was very challenging particularly as the subjects touched on emotionally very sensitive topics, and I felt responsible for the well-being of the people sketching with me. But that was only a minor hindrance to any productive work, since it was also very useful in answering the question of what role I had taken up in the process.

This method was a good basis for interacting with the camp residents. It helped bring my image of them into focus and enrich it. They gained faces, names and histories – for example, the story of Salomon who proudly told me how he had slipped into the role of a European on his journey to France, how he had dressed well and even learned the body language of others by watching them.

## WHAT REMAINS

Through our work we attempted to identify, on a personal level, our image of the »foreigner« and to understand better the plight of refugees. It was clear to us from the start that this would not be entirely possible in such a short period as two weeks. The creation of spaces for interaction, however, proved a good approach on the path to changing our thinking if the following ever more urgent questions are to be tackled productively: What do such spaces mean for Europe, and for the specific locations in which they emerge? What does it mean for the people affected to live in these conditions? What are the anxieties, desires, hopes and opinions of the residents of such places, and how do they organise their days?

We were often told how important it was that young Europeans take an interest in this situation and get involved. Our work, therefore, doesn't stop here. The *rén Institute* is something like a research laboratory that promotes an understanding of issues, and what began as the project *Zur Bleibe* will be continued. In small-scale actions we will continue to create spaces in which practical strategies can take shape.

### TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

1. The title of the project *Zur Bleibe* is intended to play on the naming conventions of pubs or inns in German-speaking countries which often begin with »Zur« or »Zum«. »Bleibe« can mean lodging(s), abode but it may also imply a location where remaining or staying is possible (»bleiben« = to remain, to stay) but without reference to any particular built form. A rough equivalent in English might be »The Stay«.



Self-documentation. Photograph by Michael

# CONVERSCENE/ KONVERSKENË

## NIKU ALEX MUÇAJ STARTING POINT

My focus is on bunkers – the bunkers that were built during the Communist dictatorship in my home country of Albania after Second World War.

Today, almost 30 years after Albania's opening up, the country is in a transition to a democratic society. Albania continues to be very poor which makes it difficult to build stable, widely supported social structures, because people are still not prepared to take the initiative in either personal or social life.

This lack of interest is based on negative experiences from the time of the dictatorship: the individual was subordinated to a fictitious collective interest and the regime tried to intimidate and control people through the idea of a constant threat. Defensive fortifications were built which were supposed to give people the idea that they were being permanently threatened from outside. Hundreds of thousands of bunkers were built of concrete throughout the country.

## BACKGROUND

My project research for *Converscene/Konverskenë* was based on personal experiences. Born in Albania, as a fifteen-year old I emigrated on my own by boat as a refugee to Switzerland via Italy.

The bunkers are firmly entrenched in my memories of childhood and adolescence. Where I was brought up on the southern Albanian coast, bunkers and the military were omnipresent. The army played an important role in society and in addition to bunkers of the *Qëndër Zjarri* (*Firing Point*) type, the army maintained other types of defensive or offensive bunkers and military facilities. The ruling doctrine that Albania should be able to mobilise 500 000 people within 15 minutes led to a very dense military infrastructure.

Bunkers of the »Qëndër Zjarri« type are the most widespread in Albania. They were sporadically used for military exercises but also served as love nests or public toilets.

This type of bunker was the subject of my diploma project *Converscene/Konverskenë*, which I undertook in 2012 at the Institute HyperWerk HGK FHNW.

## THE PROJECT

Even today the bunkers still have a strong symbolic character in Albania. Conceived of as signs of Albania's impregnability, they are actually symbols of the country's isolation. The bunkers are just as rooted in Albania's landscape as Communist forms of behaviour are in Albanian society.

The idea for this project first came after I had read a number of travel reports from Albania. It was these foreign perspectives that inspired me to set to work on this subject. Through further research and engagement with the topic I encountered the work *Concrete Mushrooms* by Elian Stefa and Gyler Mydyti. Through my contact with Elian the collaborative work *Concrete Mushrooms* emerged.

The project centred on the transformation of post-communist Albanian society. I began work on *Converscene/Konverskenë* based on my comprehensive experience of the youth culture scene and as a concert organiser, and by means of selected studies in the area of developmental sociology, sustainable development and political communication. I communicated my activities on the topic to my own network, and I was therefore able to profit from spontaneous feedback, including from Albania.

In order to support social change in Albania the idea was to transform the military connotations of the bunker.



© N.A. Muçaj, 2012





© N.A. Muçaj, 2012



© N.A. Muçaj, 2012



© N.A. Muçaj, 2012

Initially, I thought about a modular transformation of the bunkers. Due to their distribution in the landscape, perhaps they could be used in tourism or in agriculture? At the same time, however, I was attracted by the thought that the bunkers could be shown as a symbol of isolation.

I researched possibilities for an art installation which could be accessible to a broad public as a stage or pavilion. In doing so I also wanted to build a stage for artistic creativity on which a dialogue with cultural change could take place by means of the object itself. Not least, it was intended to be a space for architects and designers who were looking for alternative possibilities for the use and construction of the bunkers – a space, that is, that would function as a workshop.

It became more important for me to see the stage as a space for artistic work, for exhibitions, for discussions, as an agora, a democratic space. As I moved on in the work I focused above all on the stage as an interactive space. I had the idea of an open-air stage standing on the upturned cupola of a bunker.

The expressive power of the transformed object was immediately clear to me. It was an optimal demonstration of its inverted symbolic content – from a symbol of isolation to a symbol of exchange and opening.

The radical deconstruction of these concrete mushrooms and their conversion was able to illustrate social transformation. The open-air stage embodies social change in Albania. It brings this change into public discourse and drives it forward. It also sketches out the route that Albania as a whole ought to take – from a land of bunkers to a land of stages.

## RESULTS

The *Concrete Mushrooms* sculpture was finally made in May 2012. It required three trucks plus drivers, two 70-tonne cranes and their operators, four mechanics, a tonne of steel and 4 cubic metres of concrete.

The opening took place on June 2, 2012 in Tirana with the event *Going Public with Converscene* for which the Swiss artist Hannah Weinberger created a site specific work. A soundtrack for the opening of the stage and the summer programme was also created.

The production of the publication *Concrete Mushrooms*, the 2012 exhibition of the same name in the Riehen art-space (Switzerland), the exhibition in the Albanian pavilion at the Architecture Biennale in Venice in 2012, and finally the realisation of *Converscene/Konverskenë* in the Tirana Ekspres art-space in Tirana are tangible results of the project.

A number of partners worked together on this project. Together with Elian Stefa we have expanded the *Concrete Mushrooms* network. In addition, I have worked with public and private partners both in Albania and in Switzerland.

# REALISATIONS

»Unlike many other disciplines, where formal logic and serial thinking are predominant, artists and designers are usually visual, lateral thinkers. In our domain we know that there are no certainties, no ›right‹ answers, no simple solutions, no absolute objectivity. All views are admissible, many interpretations are possible, different ›ways of seeing‹ are encouraged – indeed, one might say that the ambiguity of visual language is its strength and fascination, and one reason for the persistence of visual practices.«

Carole Gray, Julian Malins



# EAU! WASSER! ACQUA! WATER! AGUA!

## ÉRIC SIMON

From 2015 to 2017, Professor François Morelli and I ran workshops with MFA students at Concordia University's Drawing Lab Dessin. These interdisciplinary workshops in expanded drawing brought together students from all seven of our MFA programme areas.

The Drawing Lab Dessin was created in 2013 to address pedagogical, practical, and philosophical questions around the discipline of drawing within our institution and within the world of contemporary art. In this context, Professor François Morelli and I have worked together on numerous projects over a period of about five years until his recent retirement.

In the summer of 2016, we were invited by Professor Catherine Walthard of the HyperWerk, Institute for Postindustrial Design HGK FHNW. She was also co-director of the research project *Cultural Spaces and Design. Prospects of Design Education*, and the invitation was to produce work around the theme of water. Our participating students went off and worked on their own, most often following intuition, letting intention play only a discreet role. Water, as seen through the eyes of these artists, evoked movement, reflection, distortion, translation. Twelve students met monthly with us to work and share the results of their processes and experimentations. Together we witnessed the expression of each one, as Boris Dumesnil-Poulin, Ai Ikeda, Frédérique Laliberté, Marion Lessard, Rebecca Munce, Jackie Partridge, Mylene Raiche,

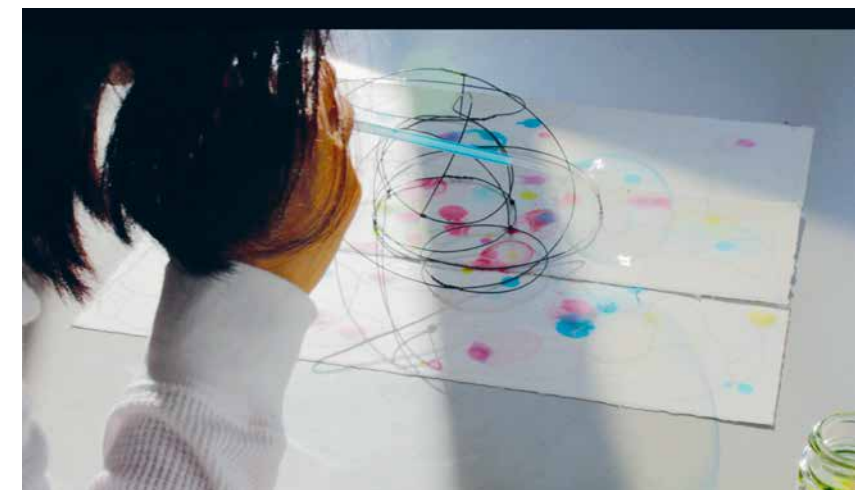
Jessica Slipp, Hannah Strauss, Sachiko Sumi, Stanila Syarova, and Orion Szydel showed us water taking on multiple forms. Through their work we examined water as it travelled and transported. We observed it absorbing and being absorbed. We saw it stained. We saw it polluted. We saw it record and transmit information. We watched water fall from the sky. We saw water evaporate, become fog, return to the sky to form clouds. Water was steam, was snow, was ice. Water was leisure space and it was social structure. Water was our shapeshifter. It adopted the shape of its container. Water was transformation. Water swelled. Water dried up. Water eroded. In the end, Sachiko Sumi summed it up nicely, saying with a smile: »*Water is impermanence.*«

In the following, I would like to present the works of two MFA students.

## WATER IS FOG

**A PROJECT OF SACHIKO SUMI** In one of the last chapters from Edwin Abbott's 1884 book *Flatland*, a »Stranger« mysteriously appears out of nowhere to the two-dimensional Flatlander known as »A. Square«. The Stranger is a »Sphere« from the three-dimensional world cutting through the two-dimensional surface that is Flatland, home of A. Square. The Sphere tries to explain the nature of his three-dimensional home Spaceland to A. Square but A. Square has difficulty understanding. In fact, A. Square is quite startled as he initially perceives the Stranger as a dot when he enters the two-dimensional Flatland. The Stranger then extends into a line – that A. Square recognizes to be a circle – a line that grows to reach its maximum size, then diminishes until it becomes a point again and then ... vanishes.

Impermanence is a fresh instant. It is the birth of space. »*Water is fog. Water is impermanence*«, says Sachiko Sumi. Everything is transformation of a moment. Fresh death. We are always late, a few hundredths of seconds behind the present. The time required for external events, sensations to reach consciousness. Not unlike astronomers watching distant stars and galaxies. The time it takes to grasp reality.



Bubbles Drawing. © S. Sumi, 2017

Sachiko Sumi mixes food colouring with soap to make coloured soap bubbles that pop over large sheets of semi-transparent paper. Three dimensions transformed into two. A circle: a slice of a sphere. Three dimensions projected onto two. Abstract drawings of unpredictable shapes. Bubbles bursting.

In 1921, Luigi Pirandello wrote the play *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. The play tells the story of six odd characters who barge in at the start of a rehearsal of another Pirandello play, *The Rules of the Game*. Their unexpected interruption infuriates the Director of the play who demands an explanation. Sachiko Sumi says that everything exists in parallel. One of the characters, the »Father«, informs the »Director« that they are incomplete characters in search of an author to complete their story and bring them to life. Water shifts from solid to liquid to gas. At first, the Director thinks they're crazy and wants to throw them out of the theatre, but the more he listens to the details of their story the more he starts to believe them. Sachiko doesn't control her materials, doesn't know, cannot know what will happen. After some time, the Director agrees to direct the six uninvited characters and attempts to do so despite the difficulties they bring with them. There is the point of view of water, the point of view of ink, the point of view of paper.

She blows another coloured bubble. Pops it. Fresh instant. Her materials are reactive, malleable, changing. She enjoys the change. Has expectations. Her lack of control challenges her expectations, breaks them. She can't predict. Fresh instants. Every one is new. Another bubble pops over the sheet of paper, soaks it, warps it and creates yet a new drawing. Some of the sheets are covered with lines made of wax to repel the water. From ice to liquid water to steam and back. Attachment to form. Cycle of change. Everything is temporary.

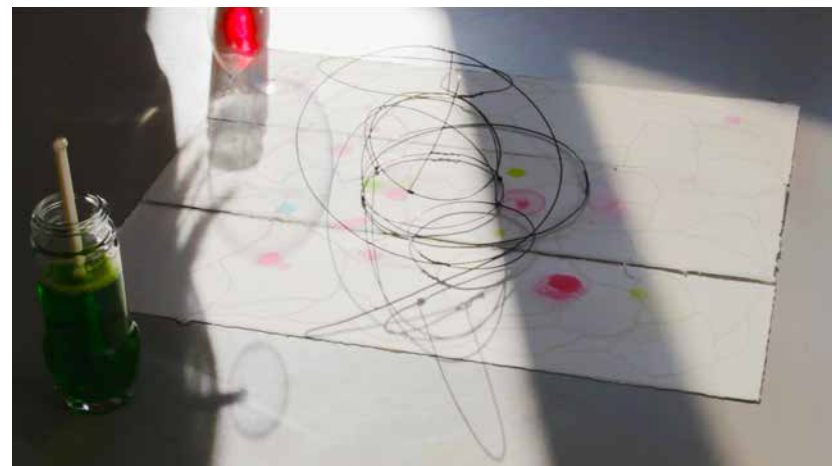
The Director of the play, confused over what is real and what is not, concludes that he lost a day of rehearsal.

The fragility of form. Another bubble pops. Another drawing is formed.

Born in Gifu, Japan, Sachiko Sumi has lived in Montreal since 2005. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Visual Arts and Media Arts from UQÀM and participated in an exchange with the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris. Since then, she has invested in several collaborative projects with artists from different disciplines such as dance and music. Her practice is rooted in pictorial, sculptural, performance, and participatory installations, and addresses unity and uniqueness in poetic confusions. She is currently enrolled in the Fibres and Material Practices concentration of Concordia's MFA Programme.

## SHALL WE CHANGE THE RHYTHM OF OUR LIVES?

**A PROJECT OF MYLENE RAICHE** For Mylene Raiche water is acutely perceived as both life-saving and life-threatening. Mylene spent her childhood visiting her grandparents' farm on the bank of the Chateauguay River. She later moved with her father near Lake St-Louis, a five-minute drive from the farm. Her head is full of pleasant memories of her time spent close to water. Images, stories, smells and sensations



Bubbles Drawing. ©S. Sumi, 2017



Fresh death ( ) birth, performance with objects.  
©S. Sumi, 2017



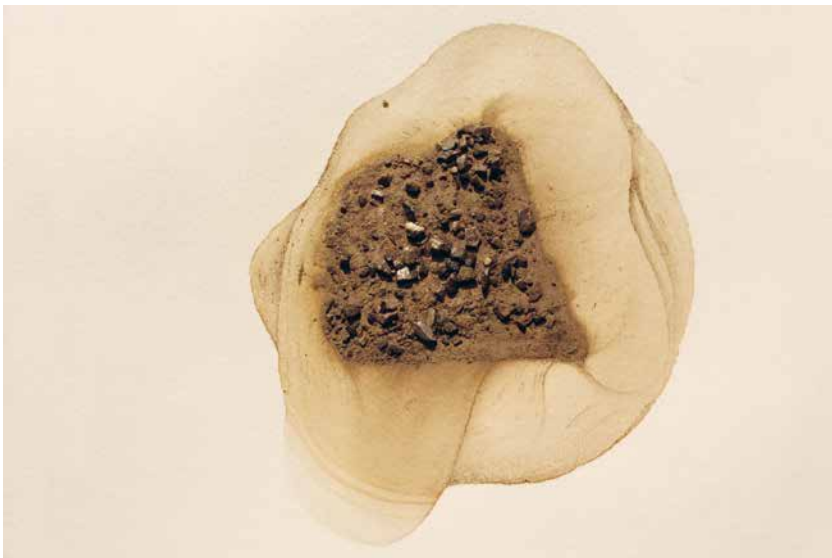
Fresh death ( ) birth, performance with objects. ©S. Sumi, 2017



of water abound. She remembers the time spent with her grandparents, with her cousins, and the boat rides to the small island where they played in abandoned cabins and invented stories of magical creatures, lost souls and ghosts.

She also tells us of her younger brother surviving a brush with death when his car sank into the frozen lake after the ice broke during the month of February 2017. He and his friend had driven out onto the lake to see the cabins transported there for ice fishing, a traditional fishing practice that involves cutting a hole in the ice and dropping a line to catch fish. They hadn't been on the lake for long when a storm broke out, sending them back in search of solid ground. As they drove back to land, they lost their way in the blowing snow, and ended up driving on thinner ice. Without warning their car went through the ice and they managed to escape but both suffered hypothermia. Her brother also had trouble finding sleep for a long time as he kept reliving that dreadful incident over and over again.

When she moved to Montreal, Mylene developed a fascination with the way urban snow collected dirt and concealed trash such as crumpled paper or cardboard, pieces of clothing, food, animal excrement and random objects of various sizes. As the snow melted with the arrival of spring, all kinds of items became exposed, some damaged or crushed, others rusted, all having been subjected to the elements and to human activity during the winter months. Mylene went out on the street and picked small chunks of soiled snow or ice and laid them on pieces of paper inside her studio, letting them melt to produce drawings from the residual traces of sand, dust, salt and dirt. As the water evaporated over the course of a few days, a brief and partial history of the winter months was revealed through the remaining sediments. Chunks of ice as tiny urban time capsules.



Untitled – Work in Progress for What's Left Behind.  
© M. Raiche, 2019



Untitled – Work in Progress for What's Left Behind. © M. Raiche, 2019

In her thesis paper, Mylene Raiche writes of memorial capsules, of information bearers. She also writes of future fossils, the ones we're producing now, and of transformative spaces. Of the body as a transformative space, one constantly involved with process and change. And she writes of living. And dying. And of how nothing disappears and how everything is transformed through time. Death and ending are only words that identify moments of transformation. *»Shall we slow down?«* she asks. *»Shall we change the rhythm of our lives?«*

She tells of a road trip she made from Montreal to California, travelling for three weeks through the deserts of California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico where the relationship to water differs greatly from ours here in Québec. Where the absence of water can mean death if your car breaks down.

We are water. We encounter water. Some of those encounters are wanted, others not. *»So what is left of those encounters?«* she asks. (Her work asks.) A memory? A sense of place? A trauma? A fear? A loss? A gratefulness? A stain?

Mylene Raiche is a recent graduate of Concordia University's MFA program in the Fibres and Material Practices concentration. Her thesis paper titled *A Silent Conversation* can be read online on Concordia's Spectrum website at [www.spectrum.library.concordia.ca](http://www.spectrum.library.concordia.ca). Her work has been shown in a number of group and solo exhibitions in Canada and in the United States.

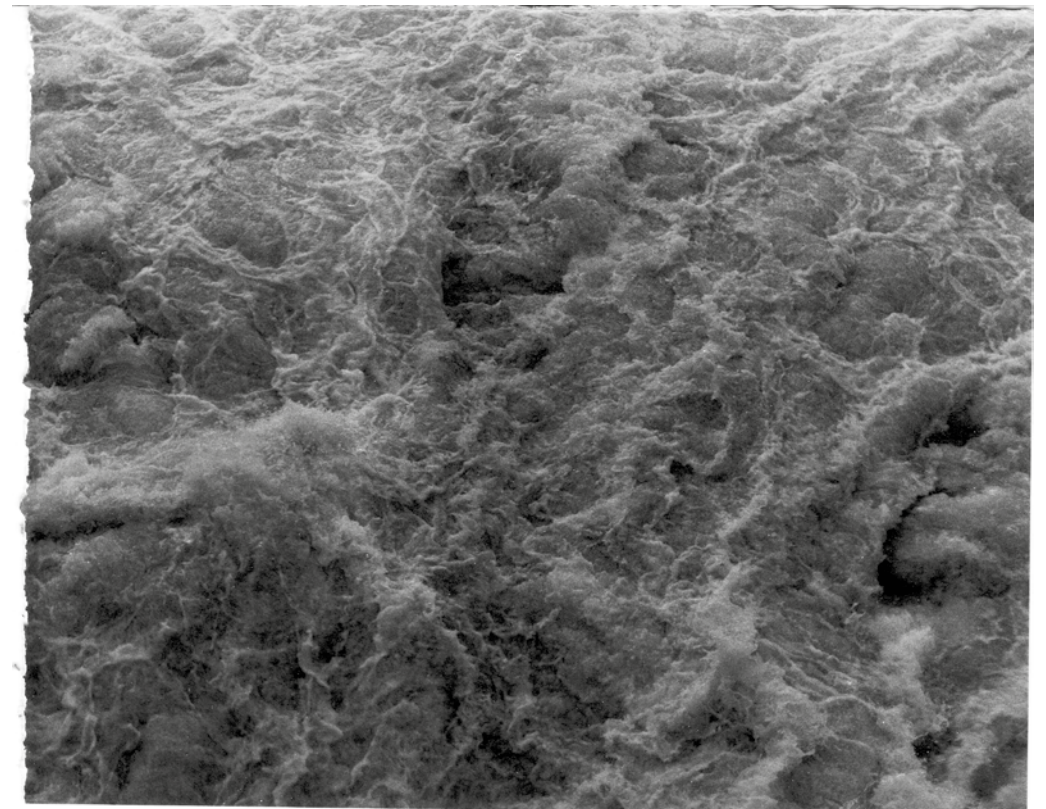
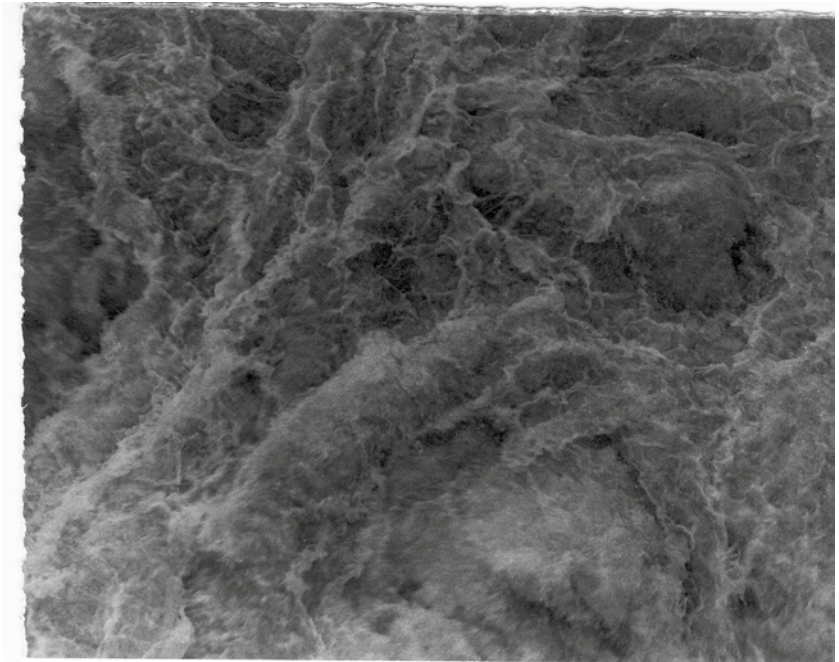


## LIFE ON MARS

David Bowie left us in 2016. In 1971, he released his song (*Is there*) *Life on Mars?* on the album *Hunky Dory*. There exist numerous interpretations of its meaning but Bowie himself spoke of a young girl disappointed with reality, wondering if there could be a better life somewhere else. As I write these words, I hear Bowie's voice inside my head singing loudly »*Is there life on Maaa-a-a-ars?*« and am reminded that this exact same question is what NASA scientists continue to present as the defining reason for Mars Exploration.

Life and water are closely connected on our planet. Wherever we find water on earth, we find life. And it appears safe to expect that the same correlation would apply on Mars. We have been looking for the presence of water on Mars for centuries. In the 18th century, astronomer and composer William Herschel suggested that the polar caps on Mars, first observed a century prior, were made of ice or snow. While Herschel's hypothesis turned out to be wrong, we have continued since then to search for water on Mars, either on its surface or preserved beneath. In the 1970s, *Mariner 9*, NASA's first orbital mission to Mars, found evidence of water and captured images of winding river beds making their way across the surface of the planet. But NASA isn't the only one aiming to engage in deeper space exploration. Along with Europe's *Mars Express* and India's *Mars Orbiter Mission*, multi-billionaires Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk also dream of colonising space. On the website of *Blue Origin*, Jeff Bezos' aerospace company, we learn of his belief in tapping space's »*unlimited resources and energy*« in order to preserve Earth for generations to come. Bezos' team speaks of building a future where millions of people can live and work in space. Could this be one of the places the girl in Bowie's song dreamt of?

Growing up in Québec in the sixties, water was taken for granted. It too was then perceived as an »unlimited resource«. A little over one fifth of Québec's vast territory was, and still is, covered with water. The province is home to over three million registered bodies of water of varying sizes, and millions of kilometers of rivers run across it. Many of those lakes have names like *Lac Elvis*, *Lac Fou*, *Lac Sec*, *Lac Pas d'Eau*, *Lac Mouillé*, *Lac Mou*, *Lac Ennuyant*, *Lac À Ma Femme* or *Lac J'en-Peux-Plus*<sup>1</sup>, granting them a form of closeness that has us considering them almost like family. In my youth, drinking water was readily available, and it seemed inexhaustible. I lived in a blue-collar neighbourhood yet many of my friends had a summer place up north, a shack on the side of a lake, a one or two-hour drive from the city. My family would also go to the lake in the summer, either to my aunt's place near *Lac Duffy* in St-Catharines, or to my uncle's on *Lac-des-Îles* in Mont-Laurier. There we would swim every day, go fishing or boating. We could spend all day at the lake playing in the water. We would also let the water run unabashedly as we washed the dishes, brushed our teeth or watered the lawn. Back then the notion of »wasting water« was not part of our understanding of the world. Had too much familiarity lead to contempt? I can't help but hear the echo of Bezos' words when he speaks of *tapping unlimited resources*.



Eau trouble du désir. © É. Simon, 2017



On his *SpaceX* website, Elon Musk writes: »*You want to wake up in the morning and think the future is going to be great – and that’s what being a spacefaring civilization is all about.*« The goal of *SpaceX* is to build the next generation of fully reusable launch vehicles capable of carrying humans to Mars and other destinations in the solar system. The objective is to have humans become a multi-planet species by constructing a self-sustaining community on Mars. (Hey, there goes David Bowie’s song again.) According to Musk, there are two possible directions for human history: either we stay on Earth forever, accepting the inevitable foreseeable extinction event somewhere down the road; or we become a space-bearing civilisation, abandon Earth and have our descendants pursue their lives on other planets. But as we search for a better life elsewhere, preferring to start anew on another planet, we might want to ask ourselves: »*Why would we do better there?*«

In the winter in Québec water turns to snow and ice. Snow has many different forms. From the large observably slow falling fluffy snowflakes to the tiny speedy ones that sting the exposed skin of your face as they hurl sideways with the wind, to name just these two. Walking on snow or ice also produces a variety of different sounds. You can tell how cold it is by listening to your boots coming in contact with the covered ground – in case you haven’t yet felt the cold on your face or through your clothes. I live close to a ferry that connects my town to the town across the Ottawa River during the summer months. When winter comes, the ferry ceases its activities, and once the river has frozen, forming ice thick enough for cars to drive over, they open the gates to the ice bridge. For more than sixty years, the ice bridge has linked both communities, encouraging winter tourism on both sides of the river. But in recent years, this natural bridge – as well as others in the province – has remained closed as winters get warmer and the ice over rivers, thinner. The ice must reach 40 centimetres in thickness in order to open the ice bridge for cars to drive across. In the last decade, the bridge couldn’t be opened in 2012, 2016 and 2017, and what used to be an exceptional occurrence is becoming increasingly common. Last winter, it was only open for 22 days, and Environment Canada meteorologists contend that rainy periods and thaws will be more and more frequent in winters to come. In these conditions, maintaining the traditional ice bridges in Québec will prove to be progressively more difficult.

The effects of climate change are most visible in the actions of water. Floods, droughts, storms are increasing in frequency. In early May 2017, the Province of Québec suffered its worst flood in over 100 years. A combination of melting winter snow and continuous rain throughout the month of April led brooks and rivers to swell up and overflow, forcing the evacuation of many. I spent a morning at the fire station filling sandbags along with other volunteers from my town. Just a few blocks away from my home, streets were flooded and homes were halfway under water. I took a series of photographs standing on a bridge looking down at the water rushing below. On the commuter train from home to work, I passed by several communities that had settled near streams and lakes. Safely seated in my compartment, I observed

from behind the train window as the water level rose inexorably, a few centimetres each day, gradually eating land, menacingly approaching the roads and the houses with unyielding and determined force. I could only imagine the occupants of these homes – their sorrow, their fears, their apprehensions as they saw the water take hold of the land. Eventually, it was clear that they would have to leave everything behind, knowing fully the slow unstoppable devastation that was about to take place.

I often think of a brief conversation I had with an older man from the Mohawk community when I was a young teenager. I was twelve or thirteen, and we had been hired to do some yard work in an industrial complex. He was our supervisor. At lunch one day, he jokingly said to me: »*You white people are so stupid, one day you’ll be selling water in bottles!*« I laughed along, half understanding what he meant but agreeing with him that the very notion of selling water in bottles was crazy. I had a limited knowledge of how much we had already begun to damage our planet, »*but really*«, I thought, »*who could be so stupid as to sell water in bottles?*« I liked his exaggeration as a form of provocative discourse to prove a point. Nobody could be that stupid, but we, quite certainly, we could approach it.

The other day, French television host Laurent Ruquier, on his show *On n’est pas couché*, read a passage from his guest, French swimmer and world champion Camille Lacourt’s autobiography, who wrote this about swimming: »*Ce que j’appelle silence, celui qui donne l’impression d’évoluer dans un monde parallèle, seul où on n’entend plus personne, rien, seul avec ton corps et ton esprit à tenter de dompter l’espace et la densité de l’eau, tenter d’y trouver des appuis durs, créer, découvrir le point, le truc et s’en servir sans brutaliser l’eau sinon on passe à travers ...* «<sup>2</sup>

We are constantly brutalising water. Yet we are water. The amount of water in the human body ranges from 50% for adults up to 78% for infants. In the *Journal of Biological Chemistry* 158, H.H. Mitchell specifies that our lungs are composed of around 83% water, our muscles and kidneys are 79% water while our brain and heart are 73% water. Our skin contains 64% water, our bones 31%. We are also air, plants, animals. And we are constantly brutalising ourselves.

Why?

## NOTES

1. Lake Elvis, Lake Crazy, Lake Dry, Lake With No Water, Lake Wet, Lake Soft, Lake Boring, My Wife’s Lake or Lake I Can’t Take It Anymore.
2. »What I call silence, that which gives the impression of moving in a parallel world, alone, hearing no one, nothing, alone with your body and your mind, trying to tame the breadth and density of water, attempting to find solid support in it, to create something which does not exist, discover the spot, the key and use it without brutalising the water or else you go through it ... «

# PARA-WHENUA-MEA - MUDDY-SOIL-OF-MOTHER- EARTH. PERSONIFICATIONS OF WATER IN TE AO MĀORI (THE MĀORI WORLD).

## NATALIE ROBERTSON

Māori elder Keri Kaa, of the tribes Ngāti Porou and Ngāti Kahungunu, wrote an *oriori* – a form of lullaby – that describes the original primordial parents Papatūānuku and Ranginui (Earth Mother and Sky Parent), and how everything in the heavens and everything on earth originated through this coupling.<sup>1</sup> Out of their separation emerged all forms of life, commencing with the elemental deities.

<i>Oriori</i>	<i>Lullaby</i>
Nāna ko Papatūānuku	Papatūānuku
Piri ai ki a Ranginui	Clung to Ranginui
Ka puta ki waho	And the family
ko te whānau atua	of gods
Te Tini te mano	came forth in
Noho pōkaikaha ana	their multitudes
i te poho mātua	Crowded in the parental bosom
Koinā tō tātai, e te tau e.	That is your lineage. My beloved.

(Kahukiwa, Robyn; Potiki, Roma 1999)

Indigenous ways of thinking about the intricate interconnectedness of all life on earth and in the atmosphere offer vitally important whole-of-landscape and seascape

paradigms that could stimulate creative environmental reinvigoration and reparation internationally. Māori experience the world as a relational space-place matrix where all things in it are holistically connected through *whakapapa* – genealogies and kinship. For Māori biologist Mere Roberts, *whakapapa* is »a philosophical construct [that] implies that all things have an origin (in the form of a primal ancestor from which they are descended), and that ontologically things come into being through the process of descent from an ancestor or ancestors«. (Roberts, Mere 2013: 93) The kin from whom we descend are higher in the cosmological order than humans, thus favouring the agency of the higher-order beings over humans. Roberts draws attention to how *whakapapa* as a cognitive genealogical framework embraces multiple ontologies including the natural sciences and spiritual knowledge, describing this as providing a »cosmos-cape« of a particular place, or habitat.

Cosmoscapes are a culture's overarching model of the scope of their cosmos, including the lived world. (Reichel, Elizabeth 2012: 136)<sup>2</sup> Māori cosmoscapes found in customary *whakapapa* genealogical chants embody whole-of-landscape and seascape thought illuminating ancestral connections with the natural world. I argue that these cosmoscapes embedded in *whakapapa* – a cognitive genealogical paradigm that connects us back to ancient ancestral deities – are as relevant today as they were in the previous millennium, and in fact can be a »repowering«<sup>3</sup> strategy in environmental reinvigoration. In centring indigenous thought and reviving cultural knowledge, we can re-learn how to relate to non-human and more-than-human beings as our ancestors rather than as resources. In doing so, the human role of environmental custodianship takes on new possibilities.

As chief constituent of life, water in all its forms – liquid, solid, and gas – can be found in Māori mythopoetic narrations of genealogies. (Best, Elsdon 1921: 2) In these ecosystemic narrations, Māori personified water in its many forms – freshwater, saltwater, floodwater, oceans, rivers, streams, springs, hot springs, rain, hail, ice, snow, clouds, mist – with different names for each persona. This article unpacks significant philosophical connections with water as an ancestral phenomenon, and through introducing Para-whenua-mea – an *atua wāhine* (a female ancestral deity of water) – delves into an extract from a *moteatea* – a customary Māori genealogical chant from the Horouta tradition.

## KI UTA KI TAI - FROM THE MOUNTAINS TO THE SEA

»*Ko wai ko au, ko au ko wai* – I am the water and the water is me.« This Māori aphorism reflects a general philosophical understanding of the relationship between people and water, in which specific waterways – especially rivers – are known as ancestors. Shifting from personal identity – »I am the water and the water is me« to ecological management, Harmsworth and Awatere outline the philosophy of »*Ki uta ki tai* – a whole-of-landscape approach [...] from the mountains to the sea«. (Harmsworth, Garth; Awatere, Shaun 2013: 275) Customarily within this whole-of-landscape framework, Māori do not see themselves as above or outside of the natural



world but as offspring who have responsibilities to care for the antecedent, parental phenomena. It reinforces another observation that connects our human birthing with the relationship with the land. When you were born your mother's waters broke, signalling the commencement of labour. Perhaps you took your time coming into the world, or perhaps you came in a rush. Either way, you came from a saline watery womb, from a body that was your whole world, housing you until that moment. Within a Māori world view, Papatūānuku is our Earth mother, she who feeds us with her breast waters – *Te Waiū* – and sustains us with all that she provides. Several homonyms communicate the significant philosophical connections that Māori perceive between the body and the land and water. As Jacinta Ruru – the pre-eminent scholar on the legal personality of water – states:

*The link between land and water and humans is a common feature of the Māori language. For instance, iwi means both ›tribe‹ and ›bone‹; hapū means both ›subtribe‹ and ›to be pregnant‹, whānau means both ›extended family‹ and ›to give birth‹; whenua means ›land‹ and ›afterbirth‹; and wai means ›water‹ but also ›memory‹ and ›who‹ (Williams 1971; Mead 2016). (Ruru, Jacinta 2018: 216)*

*Wai* is a word for water common throughout the Pacific, and *ū* is a word for breast. *Te Waiū* can refer to breastmilk, but it can also refer to rivers and vital waterways that sustain land and people. The cosmogonic birthing of the universe parallels our birthing, when we emerge from a place of watery darkness into a world of light. This knowledge is reflected in the common saying »*no wai koe?* – Whose waters do you



Te Mimi o Te Huinga puna wai and Kahikatea trees, Tikapa-a-Hinekopeka I.  
© N. Robertson, 2019

come from?» This question asks »Whose birth waters are you from?» This enquiry parallels a Māori understanding of the creation of the planet we live on, that land was born out of the saline oceans. It connects the concept of water with place and with birth. The waters of our birthing and the waters of our living are both sacred. Marei Apatu, Te Kaihautu (Chief Executive) for Te Taiwhenua o Heretaunga (a tribal Māori local authority for the Heretaunga region) explains a Māori way of understanding the body-earth-water relationship. He describes how *muriwaihou* (aquifers) are sacred because they resemble Papatūānuku's womb and amniotic fluid when she was carrying Rūaumoko (ancestral deity of earthquakes, volcanoes and seasons) at the time Ranginui (Sky Father) and Papatūānuku (Earth Mother) were split apart by their children. »*We liken it to a mother carrying a child [...] The crucial aspect of muriwaihou is that they act as the cleansers and purifiers of new life and energy.*«<sup>4</sup> For example, a freshwater spring can be an exit place for the amniotic fluids of Papatūānuku from an aquifer deep below. These ancestral paradigms reveal ancient understandings of the sacred significance of the earthly female body and the value of water in Te Ao Māori.

### PARA-WHENUA-MEA: MUDDY-SOIL-OF-MOTHER-EARTH AND ANCESTRAL CONNECTIONS WITH WATER

Māori cosmological chants communicate the relationality of the natural world often through demonstrating scientific knowledge of geology and biology. Used as a noun for floods, avalanches, and large waves, Parawhenua references the destructive action caused by natural events such as earthquakes. Parawhenua may also be a personal name.<sup>5</sup> In Māori cosmogony, Para-whenua-mea (also rendered as Parawhenuamea) is a *wahine tipuna*, an ancient feminine ancestor of the waters of earth – the springs, streams, and rivulets that run off the hills and mountains – that exist in relationship to rock.<sup>6</sup> In most, but not all tribal *pūrakau* (narratives), Para-whenua-mea is a female born from the union of Tane (the male principle ancestral deity of the forests) and Hinētūparimaunga who is the female principle ancestral deity of mountains. Māori scholar Margaret Forster, of the tribes Rongomaiwāhine and Ngāti Kahungunu, states that »*Parawhenuamea is referred to as water that springs forth from the land. Her name alludes to an understanding of the water cycle and the relationship between the sky, land, rivers and sea.*« (Forster, Margaret 2019: 8). Forster goes on to show that ancestries associated with Para-whenua-mea link her »*to natural features associated with river systems – cliffs and different types of rocks and stones.*« (Ibid.)

In the Māori language, there are no third-person gendered personal pronouns. Instead, there is a singular form *ia*.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, each human being, non-human being and more-than-human being is understood to incorporate male and female gender. The body has a masculine side *taha tane*, represented on the right-hand side of the body, and a feminine side *taha wahine*, represented on the left-hand side. Therefore, when recalling ancient knowledge, unless there are other clear indicators, the gender of an *atua* (ancestral deity) may be assigned according to the tribal region, the speaker, or the story content. Also, colonial ethnographers sometimes assumed that

a heroic character was a male, as the pronoun did not indicate gender. Māori Scholar Aroha Yates-Smith (Te Arawa *waka* – canoe –), however, has become renowned for her work in responding to such interpretations and reviving stories of the female ancestral deities. Here, she brings to life the personhood of Para-whenua-meā:

*Parawhenuamea emerged from her mother as pure (alluvial) spring waters. She then cascaded down the slopes of her mother, falling as a waterfall, then gliding across the surface of the plains. The term Parawhenuamea connotes fine grains of silt deposits rising up out of the ground with the water's force, and being carried along by the flow of the stream, merging with other streams to form large rivers, while depositing silt along the river banks. As Parawhenuamea approached the coastline, she saw the form of Kiwa, the ocean entity in the distance. Kiwa moved forward to embrace Parawhenuamea as she drew closer. Their bodies merged creating Hinemoana, the sea [...]*« (Yates-Smith, Aroha 2019: 2)

This bringing alive of the persona of Para-whenua-meā illustrates the way Māori may refer to mountains, rivers and other natural phenomena by a personal name. The relationship between Para-whenua-meā and Rakahore – a deity of rocks – shows that, if it were not for rock, we would not have flowing water. »*E kore a Parawhenuamea e haere ki te kore a Rakahore.*« (Mead, Hirini Moko; Groves, Neil 2001) The translation »*Parawhenuamea would not flow, if it were not for Rakahore*« describes the interconnectedness of particular elements while also demonstrating the intimate geological knowledge of Māori. In some genealogies, Para-whenua-meā is a mother to Rakahore, and in others a partner.

Para-whenua-meā is also a name found in *whakapapa* (ancestry) of the Waiapu River people, as the daughter of Ruawaipu, who came on the Kurahaupo *waka* (canoe), landing at Maraehara close to the present day Waiapu River Mouth. The use of a name that references an *atua* (deity) for a person could indicate a significant event of a great wave or a deluge or a flood at the time of her birth. This following customary cosmogonic chant reveals the richness and depth of understanding that Māori had of the world around them – their cosmoscape.

### MUDDY+SOIL+OF+MOTHER+EARTH

This verse – part of a lengthier chant *He Oriori Mo Te Whakatahakiterangi* – comes from the *Moana* (Oceanic) people of the Horouta *waka* (canoe) who made landfall on the East Coast of Aotearoa/New Zealand. It offers another variation on the genealogy.

*Ka noho Wai-nui, ka noho i a Rangi,  
Putā mai ki waho rā Moana-nui a Kiwa;  
Ka maringi kai raro ko Para-whenua-meā,  
Nā Moana-nui, ē, nā Moana-roa, ē.  
Nā Tu-i-te-repo, nā Tu-i-te-wao,  
Nā Tu-te-hemo-rere, nana Rangi-tahuri;*

*Nāna te whitau, ka roia hei kaka,  
Ka mahana i ahau.*

*The Mighty-waters did abide with the Sky-father,  
And unto them was born the Great-ocean of Kiwa;  
Poured down here below was the Muddy-soil-of-Mother-Earth.  
Begotten, too, by the Mighty-ocean were the Open-seas,  
The Oozy-swamp, the Oozy-forest-swamp;  
Tu-te-hemo-rere begat Rangi-tahuri;  
She grew the flax from which the cloaks were woven  
That now keep me warm.  
(Ngata, Apirana 2006: 220-233)<sup>8</sup>*

In this verse, the name Para-whenua-meā is translated by distinguished Māori literary scholar Pei Te Hurinui Jones (Ngāti Maniapoto) as the Muddy-soil-of-Mother-Earth. (Best, Elsdon 1923: 53-69) This female tutelary being can personify the liquid state of soil when mixed with water to become mud. Para-whenua-meā symbolises deluges, floods and huge waves such as tsunamis caused by earthquakes. In these forms, Para-whenua-meā is a powerful destructive, spirited, and potent force. The word *para* translates into English as sediment and *whenua* as land, while *meā* has multiple meanings such as thing or things. Collectively, these meanings suggest that Para-whenua-meā is an apt name also for liquefaction, the phenomenon when solid land becomes fluid after an earthquake. Yates-Smith's thinking infers another more bodily reading. According to H.W. Williams' Dictionary, the term *meā* can refer to the colour red, or reddish, in specific contexts. (Williams, Herbert W. 1975: 200)<sup>9</sup> It forms part of the word *karamea*, or *kākaramea* for red ochre, or coloured with ochre. (Ibid.: 98) This could indicate the phenomenon of reddish earthy ochre colouring water. Yates-Smith offers her interpretation:

*I sense a connection between Para-whenua-meā of Aotearoa and Pelehonuameā of Hawai'i, (one of our Hawaiki) not only because of their names but equally with their body fluids – Parawhenuameā's waters coursing down the slopes toward the moana [sea], and Pelehonuameā's red hot lava flowing down the upper slopes of her mauna [mountain] to the sea. Pele's mana and power are known throughout the world, while relatively few know Parawhenuameā – para referring to the alluvial deposits, whenua (land) and meā (an ancient term for red, rarely used today).  
(Yates-Smith 2019: 2)*

Here, we can now understand more fully why in his translation Jones uses Muddy-soil-of-Mother-Earth as his poetic interpretation rather than something more suggestive of clear mountain waters springing forth. These accumulative meanings reveal ancient Māori understandings of the very formation of the earth and waters.





**Te Mimi o Te Huinga puna wai and Kahikatea trees,  
Tikapa-a-Hinekoepka II.** (photo cropped) © N. Robertson, 2019.



## WAI TAI – TIDAL WATERS / WAI MĀORI – FRESHWATERS

Māori scholar Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal (of Marutūahu, Ngāti Raukawa and Ngā Puhi tribal groupings) explains that all phenomena arise from at least two antecedent, parental phenomena, in a repeatable relationship with future beings, which through reciting genealogies builds up a picture of the phenomenal world. (Royal, Te Ahukaramū Charles 1998: 7) Critically, Royal asserts that *whakapapa* linking us to the origins of Mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) always return to Papatūānuku and Ranginui, the primordial parents Earth Mother and Sky Father. Anthropologist Elsdon Best notes that »in some Maori recitals Rangi is credited with having taken two beings to wife, Papa and Wainui-atea, representing the earth and the ocean«. (Best 1982: 299) The *whakapapa* (genealogy) that accompanies this cosmological moteatea commences with Wainui-atea (the Clear Mighty Waters) coupling with Rangi. This reproductive union resulted in the creation of Moana-nui, the mighty ocean, and Moana-roa, the open seas, then the intensely dark deep ocean, Moana-pōtango, and Moana-hakere, the gloomy sea. These characterising names for the vast seas arise out of seafaring cultures that had traversed the oceanic realm for millennia. The numerous terminologies for the sea, the ocean, the waves, indicate deep knowing of the maritime world. Tides, currents, rips, waves, breakers, rollers, whitecaps, seasprays were all named, following this system of reciting genealogies. For ancient Māori and Pacific peoples, the ocean was central to their world, a life-giving and life-taking realm to be respected as a parental phenomenon.

Wai-nui-atea is the progenitor of inland waters, rivers and swamps. (Ngata 2006: 231)<sup>10</sup> This symbiotic primal relationship indicates the interdependency between rain and freshwater. The wetlands Tu-i-te-repo, Tu-i-te-wao and Tu-te-hemo-rere are then birthed out of the sea. These primeval parents precede the environmental atua such as Tanga-roa (ancestral deity of the sea) by many generations. From the swampy wetlands, Rangi-tahuri was born, the progenitor of the versatile *harakeke* (flax plants) from which *te whitau* (fibre) is extracted. Here, the author of this chant, Tupai Whakarongo Tarawhare, last priest of the house of learning Tokitoki in the Tūranga district, shifts the focus to his present-day moment and to the interdependent human relationship with the natural world creating a visual image that can be seen in the mind's eye, before returning to the immensity of the ocean realm.<sup>11</sup>

Within this cosmos, these *atua* – ancestral deities with influence over particular environmental domains – have agency above that of humans. Capable of great destruction and abundant creative forces, these energetic and dynamic natural beings are the parents to us human beings. This is a cosmological, whole-systems knowledge paradigm that accounts for the origins of life, as do environmental changes observed and recorded. It is a holistic approach that embraces interconnectivity with all things. In these times of anthropogenic ecological crises and the imminent collapse of whole systems, it is important to remember the ancient sacred understandings of the earthly female body and the value of water. Māori ancestral paradigms that developed out of their cosmescapes – from the heavens to the deep oceans, from



Te Puna a Te Rangitauaki, Te Rimu. © N. Robertson, 2018.



Te Mimi o Te Huinga puna wai and Kahikatea trees III, Tikapa-a-Hinekopeka III.  
© N. Robertson, 2019.



the mountains to the sea – can offer ancient yet fresh ways of understanding these systems. For indigenous people, these whole-systems paradigms may assist in repowering our ancestral connections, while for others they may offer models that could cultivate creative environmental revitalisation and restitution internationally. For us all and all our relations, it is vital to care for the earth's waters that are the cleansers and purifiers of new life and energy.

## NOTES

1. The Kaa family tribal links embrace Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Hokopu, Te Whānau a Hunaara, Rongomaiwahine, Rakai-Paaka, and Kahungunu. The two primary tribal confederations of Ngāti Porou and Kahungunu provide overarching affiliations.
2. Bill Yidumduma Harney is credited with coining the term »cosmoscape«. I have sourced this definition from Reichel, Elizabeth (2012).
3. Māori constitutional lawyer Moana Jackson (Ngāti Kahungunu and Ngāti Porou) uses this term in preference to decolonisation in a Māori Television Service interview with Moana Maniapoto on »Te Ao with Moana: Ihumātao – »Don't forget, the Crown caused this problem«, Moana Jackson.« Cf. Maniapoto, Moana (2019).
4. Marei Apatu Te Kaihautu (Chief Executive) for Te Taiwhenua o Heretaunga (a tribal Māori local authority for the Heretaunga region) in »Aquifers likened to mother's womb« reported by Ruby Harfield. In: *Hawke's Bay Today*. [https://www.nzherald.co.nz/hawkes-bay-today/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1503462&objectid=11901240](https://www.nzherald.co.nz/hawkes-bay-today/news/article.cfm?c_id=1503462&objectid=11901240) Accessed on: August 12, 2017.
5. Cross-referencing several dictionaries, the online Te Aka Dictionary gives a comprehensive explanation. <https://maoridictionary.co.nz>.
6. Te Ihurangi personifies rain, while Para-whenua-mea is the origin and personification of the waters of the earth. The former was one of the primal offspring, but the latter, a female, was one of the daughters of Tane by Hine-tu-pari-maunga, the Mountain Maid; hence the streams seen descending from the great ranges. The offspring of Para-whenua-mea (water) was Rakahore, who represents rock, and who took to wife Hine-uku-rangi, the Clay Maid, and produced the personified forms of stones, such as Hine-tuakirikiri (Gravel Maid), and Hine-tuahoanga (Sandstone Maid), Hine-taura (a form of flint), and many others. Another of the family was Tuamatua, who took to wife Wai-pakihī (Shoal Water), and begat different forms of stones, and sand. Para-whenua-mea was taken to wife by Kiwa, guardian of the ocean, which is known as the Great Ocean of Kiwa. But the ocean is personified in one Hine-moana (Ocean Maid). (Best, Elsdon 1921: 5)
7. <https://kupu.maori.nz/more/pronouns>
8. Waiata 234. – HE ORIORI MO TE WHAKATAHA-KI-TE-RANGI. Na Tupai (Te Whanau a Kai, Turanga). Na H. Te Kani Te Ua nga kupu, nga whakamarama, na Henare Ruru etahi o nga whakamarama. Song 234. – A LULLABY FOR TE WHAKATAHA-KI-TE-RANGI. By Tupai (Te Whanau a Kai, Turanga). Text and explanations by H. Te Kani Te Ua. Some explanations by Henare Ruru. Cf. Ngata, A. (2006). 220-233.
9. Mea (ii), a. *Red, reddish*. Ka huki kei waho, te ata mea. (S). Cf. Williams, H. W. (1975).
10. Song 234. – Cf. Ngata, A. (2006).
11. The full name of the author of the lullaby was Tupai Whakarongo Tarawhare, last priest of the house of learning Tokitoki. On the arrival of christianity, the altar from Tokitoki was taken to Waerenga-a-hika. Cf. Te Ua, Te Kani (1932).

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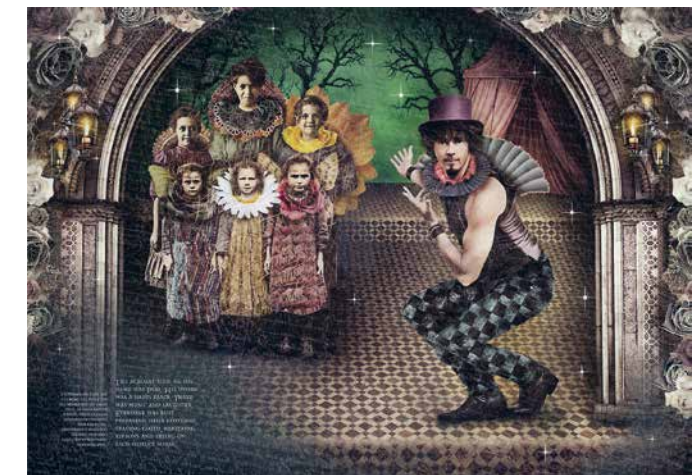
# KO WAI KO AU KO AU KO WAI I AM WATER, WATER IS ME

## TATIANA TAVARES

I have worked with *Cultural Spaces and Design* since 2012 when I was invited to present my Master's project *Carnival Land* (Figure 1) at the *Upstream. Prospects through Design* colloquium at the Institute HyperWerk in Basel. From this project, I conducted a workshop applying Lévi-Strauss' notion of »bricolage«, where the students fashioned collages to explore their own bricolage identity using Gaspard Weissheimer's diploma project – a »mobile screen print facility«. My involvement with the project continued with a number of other collaborations before I was invited to be an integral part of the research project, facilitating workshops in India and Australia with other research partners. The *Satellite* format was suggested as a form of collaboration between year 3 communication design students from AUT Auckland University of Technology (where I lecture) and the Institute HyperWerk. The workshop was conducted over a 12-week period in the spring semester of 2017.

## THE CULTURAL SPACE AGENT

One might say that my role in the *Satellite* was that of a *Cultural Space agent*. The etymology of agent comes from the Latin word *agere* which means *to act*. It also refers to chemical compounds that act upon something to produce a particular effect. Donald Davidson (1980: 46) argues that the act of an agent is »intentional under some description«. The agent is »immediate«, has a clear sense of goal or action, and practi-



**Figure 1. Images from my 2011 graphic novel »Carnival Land«.** This project formed part of my MA thesis in graphic design and was based on my experiences as an immigrant to New Zealand. Employing photomontage and creative writing, it told a tale of transformation and a young woman's quest for a place to belong. The work used metaphors of Carnival (from my home country of Brazil) and highly »staged« illustrative treatments to communicate the sense of disconnection and ambivalence one may experience as an immigrant. © T. Tavares, 2011

cal reasoning, relates also to forms of connection, to in-betweens and to translation. The agent has the ability to question the nature of purpose, intention and guidance. In particular, I felt that as a *Cultural Space agent*, I was providing a clear sense of communication, direction and autonomy. I wasn't directly teaching in the communication design programme, so my main role was to create connections and dialogues between two institutional frameworks (AUT and HyperWerk), as well as to participate in initial discussions concerning the conception of the brief and some points of student development.

First, the collaboration between AUT and HyperWerk grew out of conversations with Catherine Walthard during the *Points of View* workshop (2016) at ANU



University in Canberra, one of three International workshops of *Cultural Spaces and Design* which took place in different countries. Returning home, Catherine (in Switzerland) and I (in New Zealand) initiated the *Water* project, setting out the intentions and opportunities for collaboration between our institutions. At the beginning, it was fundamental to recognise the opportunities offered by *Cultural Spaces* as a platform for discussions and networking, and to align the aims of the project to the context of water in its local specificity. It was important to keep in mind the educational purpose of the project and the relevance of the workshop for communication design students. For this, I worked closely with the AUT lecturers Natalie Robertson, Simon Clark and Maxi Quy. They were essential contributors to the project, involved in constructing and delivering the brief; interpreting discussions; teaching the content; and actively working with the students towards their final submissions. I was also the editor for the final publication showcasing the students' work, which gave me a richer sense of involvement in the project as a creative practitioner.

## THE WAI (WATER) CONTEXT

The saying »*Ko Wai Ko Au Ko Au Ko Wai* – I am water, water is me« is a *Te Reo Māori* (Māori Language) expression frequently used to suggest the strong Māori relationship with *Kaupapa Moana* (Ocean), *Kaupapa Wai Māori* (Fresh Water) and *Kaupapa Awa* (Rivers). Natalie Robertson – one of the lecturers in this project who is Māori descendent – argues that this principle began with the Whanganui River Māori and was »widely used to affirm indigenous connections with their own particular waterways«. (Robertson 2017) As the project started, the concept of Wai (water) was not only highly relevant, it also encouraged discussions about other issues that were not immediately connected with water. In addition, it provided debates about familiar sites on our doorstep, including our own campus and nearby locations that are common ground for most Aucklanders and students. Robertson (ibid.) notes that: »*AUT University is built on land gifted to the City of Auckland<sup>1</sup>, by the local tribe, Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, in the 1840s. An underground stream gives our University marae (pan-tribal Māori meetinghouse) its name, Ngā Wai o Horotiu (the waters of Horotiu).*« The first case study was a field trip to Ōkahu Bay, a well-known and frequently visited location about 15 minutes from the busiest area of Auckland.

*We began the coursework with a field trip to nearby Ōkahu Bay, the home of Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, to explore the history of the city and its waterways from the perspective of those who gifted the land. This has been a fraught history, with Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei becoming almost landless through colonisation. From 1914, sewerage was pumped into the bay, that had once provided food for the people, and the village was refused connection to the city's fresh water supply. In the 1950s, Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei were removed from their land at Ōkahu Bay. Since the 1980s, Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei have steadfastly turned around their situation, through their powerful struggle for sovereignty. Ōkahu Bay Restoration scheme was the case study that all*

*students began with. Connecting the gift of land with the gift of water, how we treat gifts, and host/guest relationships, conceptually underpinned the project. (Robertson, ibid.)*

The relevance of the water issue to New Zealand became more evident throughout the course of the project. During the 12 weeks we collected more than 70 water headlines, indicating water-related issues occurring in different parts of New Zealand. Parallel to the semester, we faced floods across Auckland while some other cities and regions were beset by cyclones and water shortages.

## BRIEF OUTLINE

It is very common to speak nationally and internationally about Aotearoa–New Zealand as an environmentally clean country. This reputation has been slowly but steadily eroded over recent years due to a number of ecological factors. Over the years, swimming has been banned from a number of Auckland beaches due to human and animal waste. Rivers have become too polluted for swimming (with »*wadeable rivers*« as the new national standard). Town water supplies have been contaminated. Dams are being proposed to assist in intensifying dairy farming, to the detriment of native flora and fauna. Aquifer rights have been sold to multinational companies, while drought took hold across several regions. All around our country, rural and urban areas face different yet connected water-related problems. None of these concerns are going away. Indeed, many are becoming more pressing and urgent.

A very famous marketing campaign for the official tourism travel website in New Zealand has as its main tagline »*100% Pure New Zealand*«. This campaign is not only a false claim directed at promoting an appealing image of New Zealand to foreign visitors, it is also a dangerous form of communication – in one of the videos, a woman appears to be drinking water from a river until the video cuts just before the water reaches her mouth. This campaign highlights not just controversial ideas concerning the state of the New Zealand environment, but also the ethical responsibility of visual communicators to draw attention to legitimate information that brings awareness and promotes social change. With this in mind, we proposed the following design provocation to students: »*100% Pure? Has New Zealand (Aotearoa) trashed its ocean, sea, fresh water, lakes and rivers and ruined its reputation as »clean and green«?*« Students were required to interpret this provocation and develop an experimental and exploratory project to consider water in their local areas, through field trips, readings and group discussions. Field trips encouraged students to dig deeper below the surface, walking, contemplating, talking to local people and exploring historical perspectives in different locations. Addressing the political, geographic, socio-cultural, environmental, and ecological issues of water in these locations, students developed conceptual and visual approaches to their selected areas of interest. They were required to propose strategies, provocations, problems, and solutions that consider water in both literal and metaphorical ways.



**Figure 2.** Final publication »Ko Wai Ko Au Ko Au Ko Wai – I am Water, Water is me« with a collection of work from year 3 communication design students from AUT University. Photograph by T.Tavares, 2011

The *kaupapa* (purpose) of the project was to develop a practically-oriented research project that addressed the provocation through communication design artefacts and an accompanying written document explaining the contextual background to the work. Students could use a range of media, including photography, illustration, graphic design, video, and the crossovers between these disciplines. Communication strategies required the work to be suitable for an international audience (multilingual and multicultural) and to consider forms of display.

The project was developed over a course of 12 weeks and consisted of four 3-week project phases to discover, visualise, develop, and deliver:

**Stage 1 (discover):** The first 3-week block constituted an intensive research and visual development phase. It was intended to nurture skills in research, fieldwork, camera work, drawing, and map-making while on location.

**Stage 2 (visualise):** The second 3-week block was dedicated to visualising the material gathered; to considering metaphorical approaches; and to selecting a way forward in the development of a project. Students evaluated their research and started to determine a preferred personal direction.

**Stage 3 (develop):** In the third 3-week block, students continued to develop a specific project and visual strategy based on one selected idea/location/site/issue. At this stage, students were able to develop a more metaphorical approach to the information they had gathered. This phase was marked by an intensive making period.

**Stage 4 (deliver):** In the last 3 weeks, students were required to refine, synthesise and deliver the outcomes. They were required to work more thoughtfully towards a final goal of creating a communication strategy for an international audience.

At the end of the project, students Jessica Tweed and Cameron Roby-Mais were selected to participate in the colloquium *Globalisation is a Design Issue* and present their final projects at the Museum der Kulturen in Basel, Switzerland in 2017. Alongside their work, a selection of other students' finished artefacts was transported to and exhibited at the location. A publication with all the students' work was designed containing a collection of statements, thoughts, process work and imagery from each student. (Figure 2)

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

In their final statements, students related their experiences and strategies during the project. The following are a selection of five students and their statements, that were written as the final submission for the publication *Ko Wai Ko Au Ko Au Ko Wai – I am Water, Water is me*:

### CAMERON ROBY-MAIS: DAIRY FARMING

*»Cows may not be the first thing that come to mind when talking about water. However, after researching the state of New Zealand waterways, the culprit wasn't hard to spot. New Zealand culture is heavily based around farming. There is a sense that our love for farming is somehow in conjunction with our clean, green image. As this project grew and the information started to reveal the truth behind the agriculture industry, it became clear what needs to happen to heal New Zealand.*

*I started this project researching water outlets, where freshwater rivers meet the sea. I couldn't understand why these secluded waterways, far from human contamination, were becoming more and more polluted. From ground level it's hard to see the entirety of the issue. However, after using Google Earth it became obvious that the huge amounts of livestock bordering the rivers were creating too much waste for the ecosystem to process. When it rains, this waste matter gets washed into the river, inevitably destroying all life that calls the river home.«*

Cameron Roby-Mais is a recent graduate of AUT's communication design program. He has spent the last year working in New York as a creative director and has now returned to New Zealand upon opening a creative studio, *Lude Factory*.



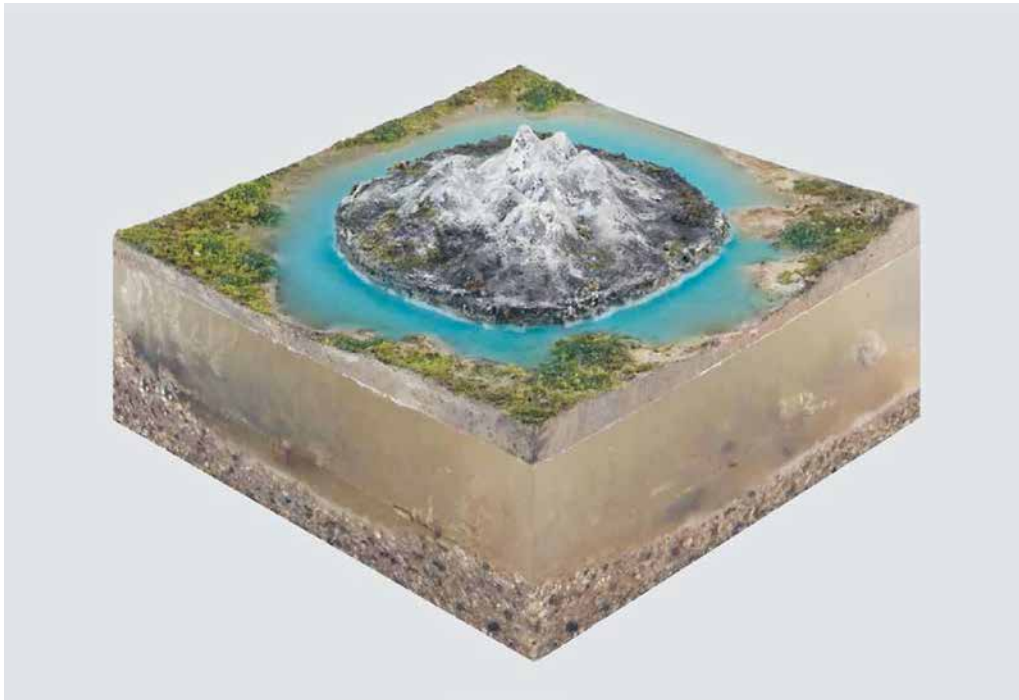
**Cameron Roby-Mais.** Series of outcomes containing a propaganda poster series, a short film, and an interactive website with additional facts to help enlighten viewers and spread the word of change. © C. Roby-Mais, 2017



### TERRIE SHUM: WAIRAU CREEK (MILFORD) – GEOLOGICAL DEGRADATION

»In the investigation taken at one of the polluted Auckland rivers, Wairau Creek in Milford, I found myself particularly interested in studying the conventional texture around the river – the mud, soil, polluted water, and sediment around the site. Most of the works I made are based on making three-dimensional sculptures from studying the textural photographs I took on site, thus they are able to reflect how the river has been affected by urban development in the past. This provides the viewers a direct close-up of the current state of New Zealand river quality, as opposed to their expectation of clean, green New Zealand.«

Terrie Shum is a communication design graduate of Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand. As a digital designer, she specialises in graphic design, illustration and concept design, and has an interest in exploring themes in relation to humans, nature, and futurism. More of her digital illustrative artworks can be seen at this website: [www.artstation.com/artist/sckiu](http://www.artstation.com/artist/sckiu)



**Terrie Shum.** This sculpture follows the concept of an »edible scenery cake«. The snow-capped mountain in the centre surrounded by crystal-clear water is an iconic representation of New Zealand scenery. However, the bottom is filled with muddy yellowish water and a lot of rubbish which immediately taints its natural beauty – this is the reality of »100% Pure New Zealand«. Different modelling techniques were used in the making of this sculpture – FDM printing, resin casting with found objects, and realistic scenery painting. © T.Shum, 2017



**Hope McConnell.** Series of illustrations using silk screen print over layered translucent perspex panels. The illustrations were part of the documentation of a number of polluted sites, including Meola Reef, McLaren Falls and Lake Rotoiti. © H. McConnell, 2017

### HOPE MCCONNELL: UNENLIGHTENED YOUTH

»I have decided to create a series of four illustrated works, depicting environments around New Zealand being used recreationally by youths. The areas I illustrate are sites where the water is contaminated, beginning with a site that is not severely polluted, and then consecutively depicting sites that are more polluted than the last. Activity and leisure are common at all of the sites I will illustrate, specifically among the 10-25 age bracket. I will use several layers of illustrations on perspex, to convey the depth of water pollution as an issue around New Zealand. As the environments I depict get progressively more polluted, I will use increasing layers of pollutant imagery in my illustrations. This will serve as a visual metaphor to show the scale of contaminated environments in New Zealand. The only area of the layers underneath that is not obscured will be the water where you can see straight through to the perspex illustrations of pollution.«

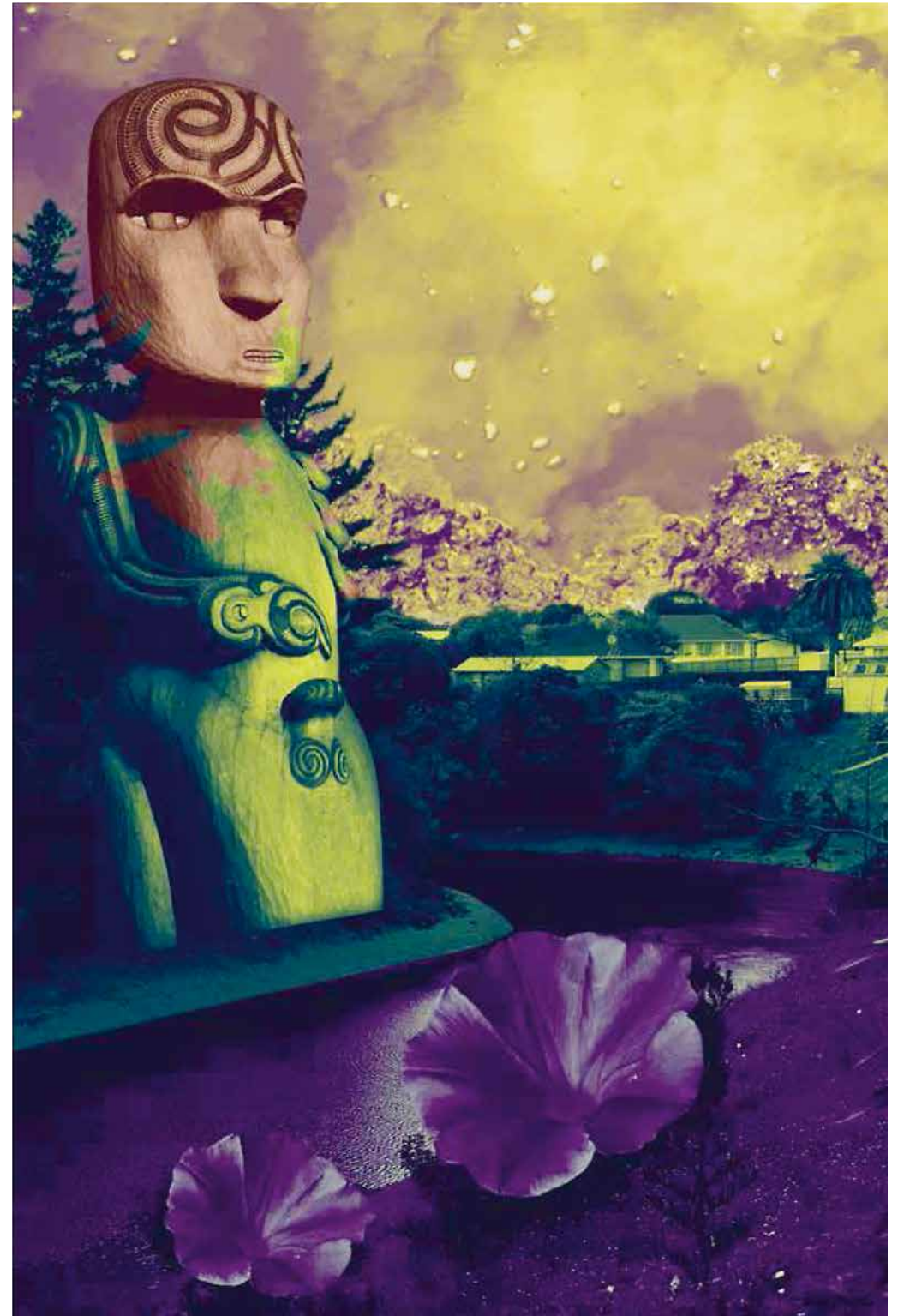
Hope McConnell is a communication designer and illustrator from Tauranga, New Zealand. In 2017, she graduated with a BFA in Communication Design from AUT. She is currently available for freelance projects or part-time work.

[www.hopemccconnell.com/about](http://www.hopemccconnell.com/about)





**Kauri Finlay.** A series of illustrations using childhood photographs as reference. Her illustrations are sentimental in that they evoke a sense of nostalgia, but they also provide contrast and alertness in their use of colour. © K. Finlay, 2017



**Libby Carpenter.** Collection of images taken at Oruarangi stream with pink residue, including one photo-montage illustration from the »carousel book«. © L. Carpenter, 2017



## KAURI FINLAY: NOSTALGIC TOXIC YELLOW

»Through my project, I wanted to shine light on this lack of awareness and ignorance of people, and, in this case, of New Zealanders specifically. I figured that in order to create a change in the mindset of people, awareness must first be raised. The approach I have chosen to use comes in the form of an illustrative series of work. I have illustrated, using graphite, people interacting with water. However, the water is a toxic yellow colour created using modelling paste and acrylic paint. The toxic yellow represents the pollution in New Zealand waterways. The people appear completely oblivious to the toxic state of the water they are interacting with. I have also used old photographs of New Zealanders interacting with waterways that are now too polluted to swim in. This adds a nostalgic element to my work, which I hope will evoke an emotional response from the viewer. The series includes five A2-sized illustrations, which means five different polluted New Zealand locations.«

Kauri Finlay is studying at Auckland University of Technology and undertaking her Master of Design in communication design. Her work explores various illustration techniques, and she is currently in the process of creating a graphic novel. For a closer look at her work, check out her portfolio: [www.kaurifinlay.wixsite.com/myportfolio](http://www.kaurifinlay.wixsite.com/myportfolio)

## LIBBY CARPENTER + ORUARANGI STREAM

»My project began to be developed and refined when I involved the research I was doing alongside it. I learned of an event in West Auckland in 2013: a waterway called Oruarangi stream had its banks and waters coloured purple after thousands of litres of dye was spilt into it, killing creatures and staining its reputation. In the 1900s children grew up around this water and would fish there all the time.

In visiting this site, I initially observed that there was, in fact, little life left. After climbing along the muddy bank, however, I experienced a serendipitous moment of discovering purple morning glory. The only colour and life in the whole area just so happened to be the same colour as the dye spilt. Naturally, I then highlighted and celebrated this through my work.

From here, my research developed further still, as did my work. I became interested in learning more about New Zealand's Māori culture, reading the stories and myths. The overnight occurrence of a purple stream is such a spontaneous event that I was inspired to look at creating a story. In the end, my project is a short story, a morality tale, about this event and our water issues. It takes the form of a small book, created using a »carousel book«, layered technique.«

Elizabeth (Libby) Carpenter is a communication design graduate of the Auckland University of Technology. Her work has a focus on publication and collage and has been shown in group exhibitions in New Zealand and Switzerland. She is currently a graphic designer in Tauranga, New Zealand.

## CONCLUSION

The range of projects created by the students branched out to include a number of different creative explorations with materials, visual languages, techniques, media forms, and research approaches. Their initial investigations were based on a broad and universal understanding of water and were not yet applied in a deeper and more localised way. The process of visiting different locations gradually brought students to a deeper perception of their surroundings, their neighbourhoods, and the hidden creeks behind their houses. Students also travelled around 32 locations in New Zealand, exploring specific polluted sites; concepts of water as a life-giving resource; intensive agricultural impacts; and restoration projects. The topic of cultural spaces and water provided opportunities for discussing the local problems that occur in different locations in New Zealand, while creating an interesting dialogue between the local and the global and their relationships. The issue of water is emergent, decisive, and deeply important in the cultural space of New Zealand. The final statements from students are deeply revealing and life-changing. This project has not only changed students' perception of the state of waterways in New Zealand – it has also profoundly transformed their understanding of their own ethical responsibility as visual communicators.

## NOTE

1. Auckland is the largest urban concentration of Pacific Islanders from Samoa, Tonga, the Cook Islands and Fiji. There is a very strong culture of Māori people and the Pakeha (as Māori call non-Māori New Zealanders of European origin). More recently, the influence of Asian cultures is quite predominant.

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# RARANGA

## JESSICA KATE TWEED

*Kia ora koutou* (Greetings). The cultural space I chose to explore is called Ōkahu Bay. (Figure 1) My work began when I had an opportunity to photo-document a weaving project organised by a local tribe.

For this project, indigenous weavers sourced leaves from native plants, cut and heckled the leaves to expose the inner fibres, and then plaited sections of fibres into a braided rope (Figures 2a, 2b) using a weaving technique called *raranga*. Mussels were then grown on the rope and eventually put into the ocean at Ōkahu Bay to help filter pollution in the water.

The history of Ōkahu Bay is a story about what we can no longer see, because English settlers destroyed it. Ōkahu Bay was home to the Māori tribe Ngāti Whātua. Ngāti Whātua endured many traumas during New Zealand's colonisation. They were stripped of all but one small section of land around Ōkahu Bay. They watched as a main road and sewer were built between their homes and the water. Then their sacred communal space and houses were burned to the ground by the government. Finally, they saw a commercial marina built on the Western end of their bay. These events saw the community scatter, and along with them the knowledge of their language and culture. In the last 40 years some of the land has been returned, but the community is still healing.



Figure 1. © J. K. Tweed, 2017



Figures 2a + 2b. © J. K. Tweed, 2017



Māori are a spiritual people. They believe that *wai* (water), the foundation of all life, is an energy. They view ancestral waterways and other natural resources as treasures with spiritual and metaphysical properties that are bound together within the *mauri* (life force) that empowers all living things.

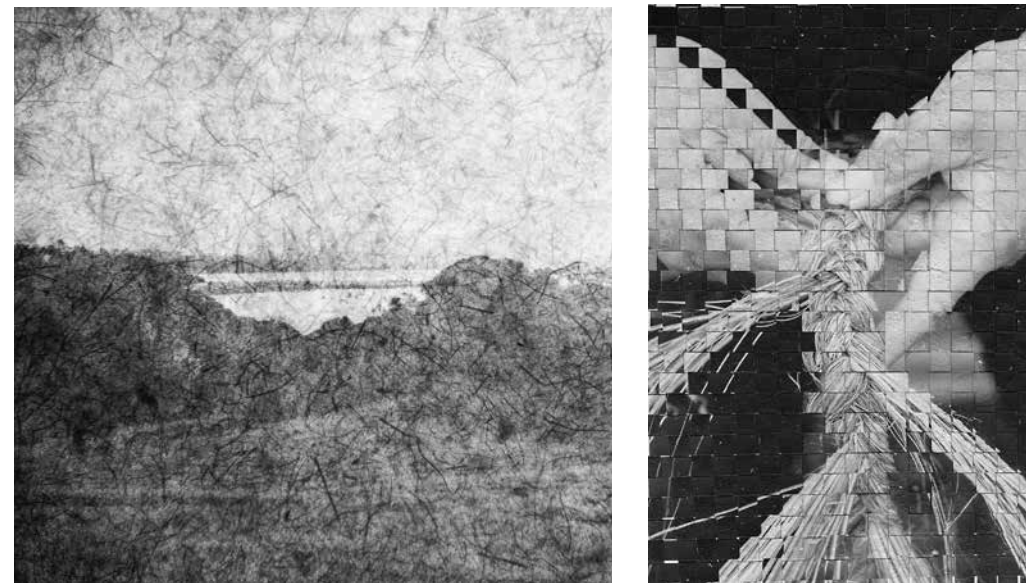
Although water was my key theme, my work took a holistic view of it within the context of Ōkahu Bay's restoration. The environmental and cultural healing in the community are intrinsically linked and water cannot be viewed in isolation without understanding Māori culture.

My work was about different ways of seeing. Shifting from a Western view of natural resources to a Māori view, within a liminal space. I was separating myself from my own culture yet not a part of Māori culture. The people of Ngāti Whātua were also operating within a liminal space; their restoration process is a time between what was and what will be.

Throughout the semester, I studied various Māori artists. One example is Lonnie Hutchinson. Her use of pattern, paper, and light creates a commentary on everything from Māori cosmology to female empowerment. Hutchinson is not afraid to confront people with her confidence as an indigenous artist. This is highlighted by the scale in which she works. (Figure 3)



Figure 3. Photograph by J.K. Tweed, 2017



Figures 4 + 5. © J.K. Tweed, 2017

While studying Māori artists I needed to understand how I, as a *pakeha* (white) designer, could develop a piece of work based on Māori culture and design. Johnson Witehira, a lecturer at Auckland University of Technology, pointed out in his PhD thesis that designers must understand Māori knowledge and develop an awareness of how their works will reflect and transmit Māori ideas. He states that if the »*integrity and intent of Māori form and content*« are maintained, designers will be enabled to »*express culturally significant messages*« regardless of race. (Witehira, Johnson 2013)

I focused my work on *raranga* (weaving) and formed the research question: How can *raranga* be used as a metaphor for the environmental and cultural restoration of Ōkahu Bay and its people?

It is important to know that the native *harakeke* (flax) plant is most commonly used for *raranga*. It is a sustainable resource and can be planted along waterways to prevent pollution by absorbing liquid waste runoff. In Māori culture this plant represents *whanau* (family): the inner shoots are the children who are protectively surrounded by the parents and the outer leaves are the grandparents and ancestors. Pre-twentieth-century Māori culture was passed on largely through storytelling, both orally and through Māori art. *Raranga* was one such system of communication. Māori weaver Erenora Puketapu-Hetet stated that »of all the Māori weaving techniques, *raranga* is the one that has best survived colonisation«.

I knew that the duration of this project would not allow sufficient time to learn how to weave, and it did not seem appropriate to create a traditional woven piece. Instead, I purchased hand-made *harakeke* paper from local artists. Held to the light you can see pieces of fibre ingrained in the page. (Figure 4) I printed images from the photo-documentation project onto the paper, and after some time I found myself beginning to weave the photographs together. (Figure 5)





Figure 6 + 7. © J. K. Tweed, 2017

Figure 8. Map data © 2019 Google

My work combines a muted portrait (Figure 6) of a key elder from Ngāti Whātua with imagery of water from Ōkahu Bay. (Figure 7) The seascape is a typical New Zealand blue-grey colour. This photograph was taken down at Ōkahu Bay. The portrait is of Tamaiti Tamaariki, aged 75. He stares at something off camera as if he is reflecting on his people's future, and a sense of hope shines out from his eyes. He has used his fishing knowledge of existing reefs and mussel beds to assist in mussel planting efforts in Ōkahu Bay.

The pattern I used to weave the photographs together is derived from Ngāti Whātua's sacred communal space on their land. (Figure 8) The act of weaving was a fascinating process. It required patience, mindfulness, and a respect for the form I was slowly shaping. I think this echoes the sentiments of the restoration process.

»How can raranga be used as a metaphor for the environmental and cultural restoration of Ōkahu Bay and its people?« Raranga can be used as a metaphor because it physically requires many strands coming together. The strands represent people, connections, relationships, natural resources, and stories. They reflect unity, strength, and togetherness. They represent torn history folding into new beginnings, and the junction between them. (Figure 9)

I hope this project gives a glimpse into the beauty of New Zealand's indigenous people and the craft of raranga. *Kia ora rawa atu* (Many thanks).

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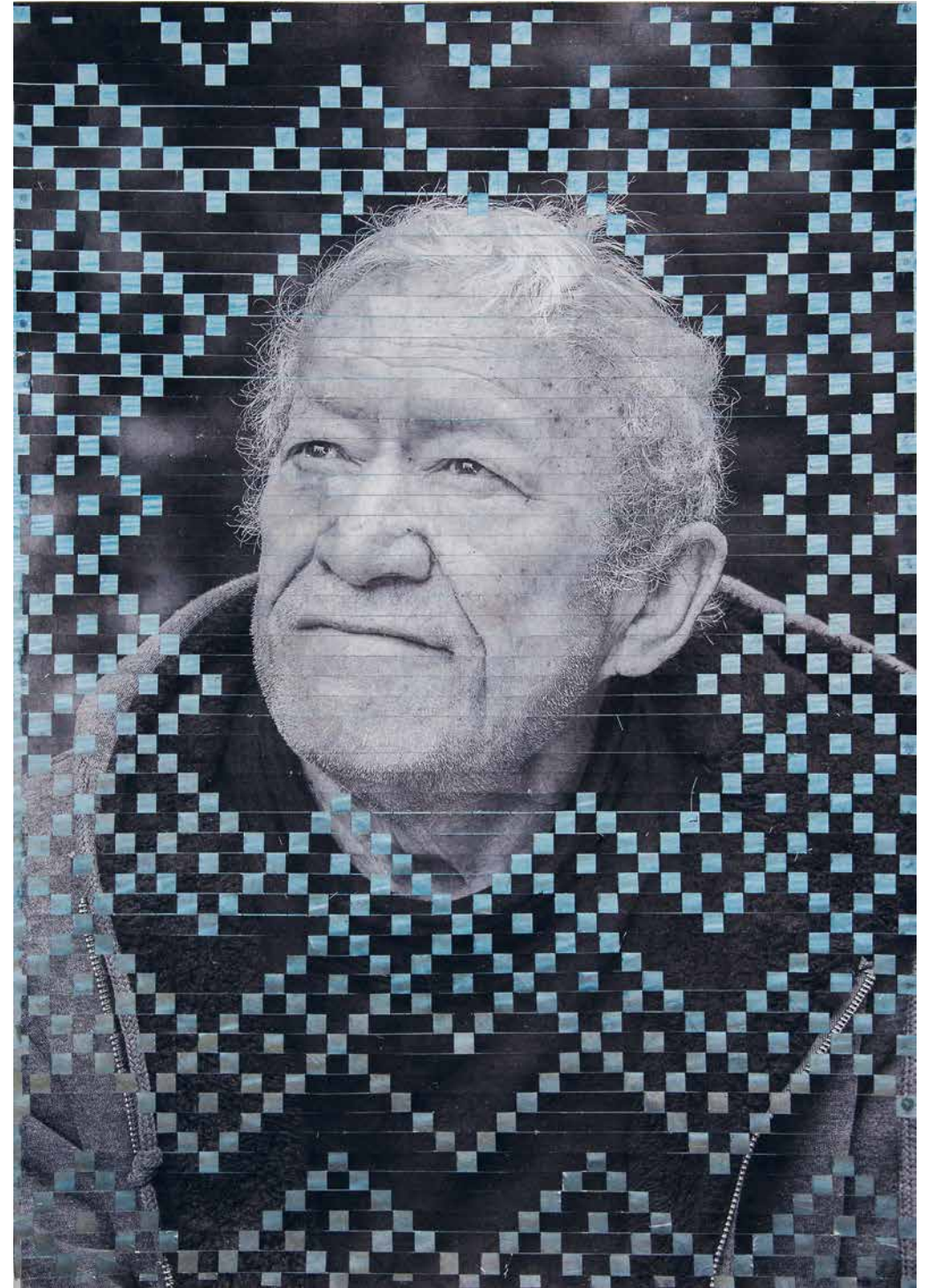


Figure 9. © J. K. Tweed, 2017



## THE ONE AND THE MANY: CONNECTING WITH AND CARING FOR EACH OTHER

*Throughout the three years of the Cultural Spaces and Design research project we encountered students, lecturers and institutions interested in collaborating on themes to do with cultural spaces. After AUT of New Zealand had participated in the 2017 satellite workshop on water, we developed various forms of working together in the field of design education. The latest iteration presented here started in January 2019 and will end in January 2020. It is an open process between students (and lecturers) from New Zealand and Switzerland, and it explores how relationships enable and transform ways of design through creative practices. It is a practical investigation for possible future teaching and learning forms.*

### FIONA AMUNDSEN, DIENEKE JANSEN

Coming from the cultural space of a colonised country, we believe »[...] we live enmeshed in structures, institutions and webs of ideas which are the product of history, formed by acts of imagination, courage, generosity, greed and brutality performed by previous generations.« (Morris-Suzuki, Tessa 2005: 26-27)

This socio-political environment impacts the ways we think about, teach and practise the creative practices we engage in. We are influenced by decolonial methodologies that challenge the very institutions we benefit from, teach within and which support creative practices. However, the methods we use to challenge do not focus on critical distance, disclosure, or a general scepticism towards how cultural knowledge is formed and represented through creative practices. Rather, we are interested in

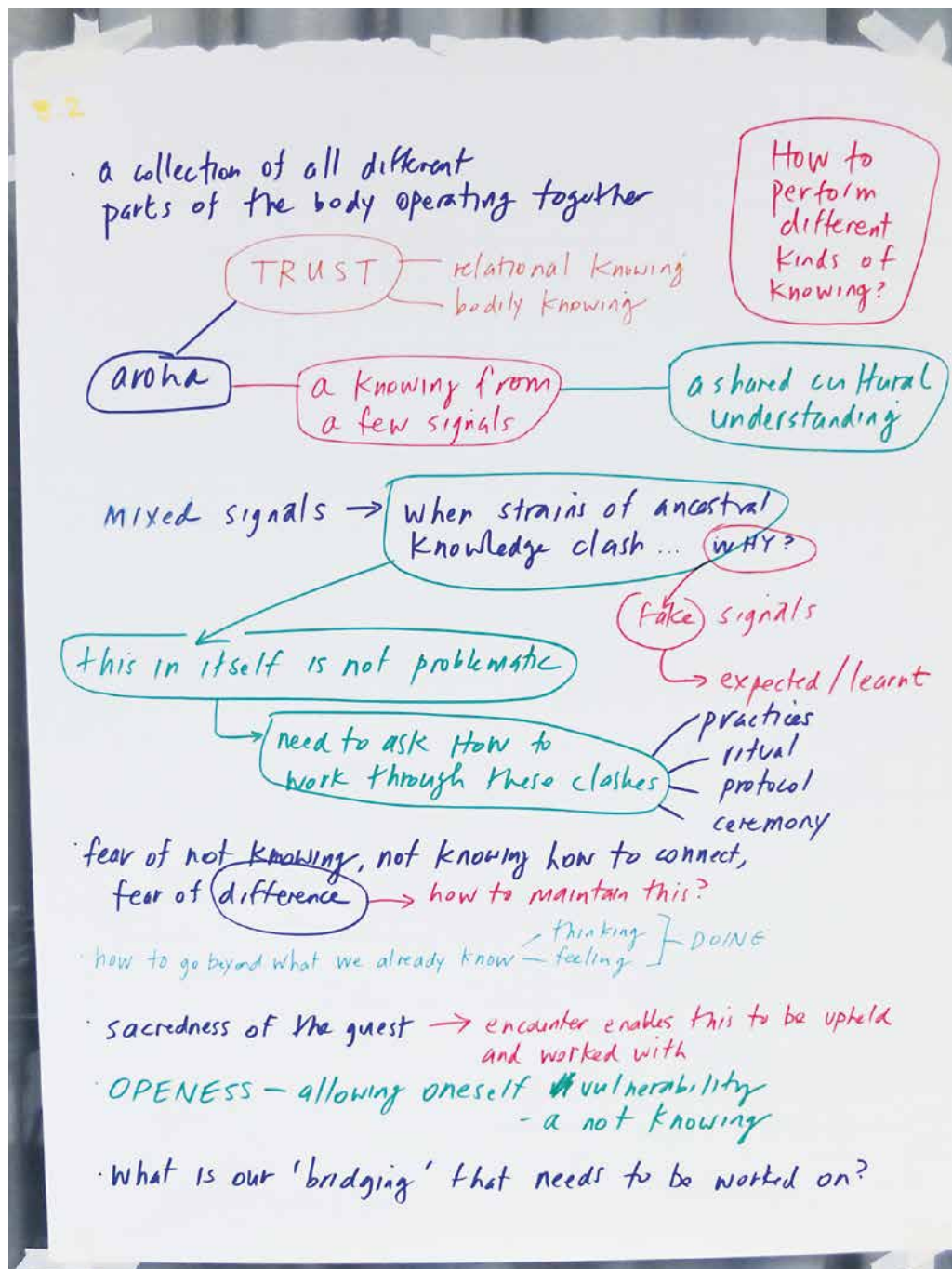
alternative ways of understanding and being with each other's knowledge, histories, spaces and experiences – there is a focus on embracing the relationality of ourselves to each other and to a bigger universal presence. These methods privilege careful acts of listening, »noticing, being affected [...] multiplicity, surprise, rich divergence, consolation, creativity and love«. (Love, Heather 2010: 237)

Our workshops »*The One and the Many: Connecting with and Caring for Each Other*« started and finished with two interrelating concepts: connection and care. The title of these workshops reference American theorist Grant Kester's publication *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* which explores how individual consciousness and collective art-making practices can be channelled into a meaningful response to the pressures of our current political climate. (Kester, Grant H. 2011: 226) At the core of these responses are questions linked to what it means for humans to remain connected and cared for, as well as what such practices look like and involve. Such thinking can interrogate the legacies of colonial, political and economic violence by developing decolonising practices and ways of living. We acknowledge that we have responsibilities that stretch beyond socio-cultural phenomena themselves, meaning we also have responsibilities to those who returned our greeting; to those who we asked to be host; to those who we asked to be guest; to those who offered care; to images; to words; to stories; to ancestors; to histories; to families; to communities.

It is from this position that we consider how creative practice may enable meaningful connections for students from the other side of the world who speak different languages, and whose lives are infused with different political concerns. Subsequently, we became interested in how to develop collaborative creative practices that continue conversations, connections, respect of cultural differences, and ways to care for each other across the 18 416 km spatial and eleven hour temporal divide that separates Switzerland from Aotearoa New Zealand. We ask: how might we continue the exchange that has taken place between ourselves and the people at HyperWerk by including our Aotearoa New Zealand students? Such questioning brings with it logistical and conceptual challenges; what follows is a discussion in which we negotiate these hurdles.

### CONNECTING: HOSTING AND GUESTING

Arriving at HyperWerk in November 2018, we were excited to participate in and experience an alternative creative learning and teaching framework. Conscious of the diverse languages and cultural contexts existing between students, new colleagues and ourselves – along with how these cultural differences can be embraced and taken care of – we explored how to be present, how to listen with care, and how to find new ways of understanding each other. As both guests of HyperWerk and hosts of two workshops, we looked at Māori cultural protocols and practices of hosting and guesting to support our learning and teaching. These practices framed how we met each other and introduced »who we are« and »where we come from«. Students were



Introduction to the workshop »Caring for Each Other«. Photograph by C. Walthard, 2018

introduced to the concept of *pōwhiri*, which is a Māori ritual of encounter that enables an understanding of intent to be established and for friendships and alliances to be forged: a *pōwhiri* concludes with the all-important practice of sharing food together.

Further protocols of practice were then developed from Māori foundational concepts of *Whakawhanaungatanga*, *Aroha*, *Manaakitanga* and *Mātauranga*.<sup>1</sup>

HyperWerk students embraced and engaged with these ideas openly. Now, back in Aotearoa New Zealand, we are exploring how creative practices can function to keep these friendships and alliances alive, specifically as we establish mechanisms for AUT and HyperWerk students to encounter, be guests to, and hosts of each other.

### EXPLORING CONNECTING AS MAKING <=> MAKING AS CONNECTING (FIRST WORKSHOP)

With the provocation »What types of practices bring humans together?« we explored how connecting and making have a reciprocal relationship. We also introduced the proposition that a lens could function as both a host and a guest. With an attitude of love, this proposition asked us to consider how to utilize moving image technologies to be a guest to another's stories, experiences, histories, culture and country, while also a host across cultural time and space. We were interested in considering the complex ethical responsibilities that come with using a camera, specifically what it means to »take« or »make« a photograph or video. We needed to ask ourselves, in our creative practices: How can we destabilise constructions of power and decolonise photographic and filmic documents? How can we interrupt the self (hosting) and care for and uphold a person's mana (status, pride, integrity, self-respect) through manaakitanga (hospitality)? This question is relevant to wherever one lives, be it Aotearoa New Zealand or Switzerland, and asks us to consider how creative practices bring humans together.

### CARING FOR IMAGES <=> CARING FOR EACH OTHER (SECOND WORKSHOP)

With the provocation »What draws us together and what holds us apart?« we explored how creative practice could enact forms of human-to-human care. We were particularly interested in exploring how to care for experiences, histories, and stories that sit outside our own. We worked with ideas concerning archives – specifically, how state-sanctioned institutional archives have been established around what is deemed as important and worth preserving and caring for. This mandate extends to archives containing images as well as other kinds of documents, all of which contribute to the production of cultural knowledge, narratives, histories, images, and memories. We wanted to acknowledge how there are voices, stories and experiences which are either marginalised or altogether missing. As a result, archives reinforce particular ideologies that privilege Western hegemonic discourse.

By working collaboratively, we aimed to explore how creative practices could function to imagine other archival forms where images and documents are cared for. To enact this thinking into practice, we worked with the proposition of first conceiving of alternative archival forms, and then swapping them with one another so that we could take on the role of caring for something that resides outside our own



immediate experiences. This process positioned archives as relational; they are not »something to be retrieved from the past, but something that we are in relation to, and coexist with«. (Huddleston, Charlotte 2017: 21) We were interested in how this past, present and future orientation of archives brings with it a responsibility to engage ethically. Accordingly, we considered how practices of archiving *may draw us together and hold us apart*.

## CONTINUING OUR CONNECTION

There is an urgency to develop creative forms of connection outside of colonial and corporate frameworks, and to address the social and environmental crises affecting the earth. There is an urgency for a responsiveness that emerges from vulnerability and allows connection between *The One and the Many*.<sup>2</sup> There is a strong desire from both hemispheres to nurture and develop connections made between ourselves, Fiona Amundsen and Dieneke Jansen, and our new friends at HyperWerk, Catherine Walthard and Regine Halter and the students who generously participated in our workshops: Giovanna León, Valentina Noëlle Kobi, Johanna von Felten, Raphael Reichert, Fabio Bissinger, Serena Lehmann, Kim Berit Wüst, and Manuela Luterbacher. With this motivation we are creatively discovering how it is possible to experience another kind of cultural space while avoiding air travel. Although this space considers cultural practices of hospitality, and associated protocols and practices existing between Switzerland and Aotearoa New Zealand, it does so without embarking on a comparative study. Instead, our creative collaborative practices are considering human values of friendship that consciously take on board what it means to be a guest to another's stories, experiences, histories, culture and country. Our collaboration seeks to develop unscripted connections that are supported by protocols of respect that grow our experiences of ethical relationality.

Together with respect, patience and careful listening, we are aiming to engage in collaborative creative practices that honour those who are hosting and inviting others into relationship. We are interested in how these considerations may enable us to be in relationship with each other, while also forming questions concerning how to language and interpret the socio-cultural spaces that exist between Aotearoa New Zealand and Switzerland. This relational space of connection ensures that we resist collapsing and culturally homogenising our Aotearoa and Swiss differences into singular creative forms. Key to our collaborative practices, therefore, is a reconsideration and interpretation of our modes of shared languages, be they oral, visual, audio, aesthetic, institutional, jargon, social, political, spiritual and ones yet to be imagined. Protocols of practice – emerging from agreed-upon structures – as well as their arrangements and rhythms provide support while facilitating understanding and respect. By placing emphasis on the structures we employ to encounter and care for each other, we are able to develop creative methods that *practise* what an inter-trans-multi-cultural space feels and looks like. It is through such methods that the spatial and temporal divides separating where we stand can be cared for.

## CRAFTING RELATIONSHIPS. A PROCESS DIARY CATHERINE WALTHARD

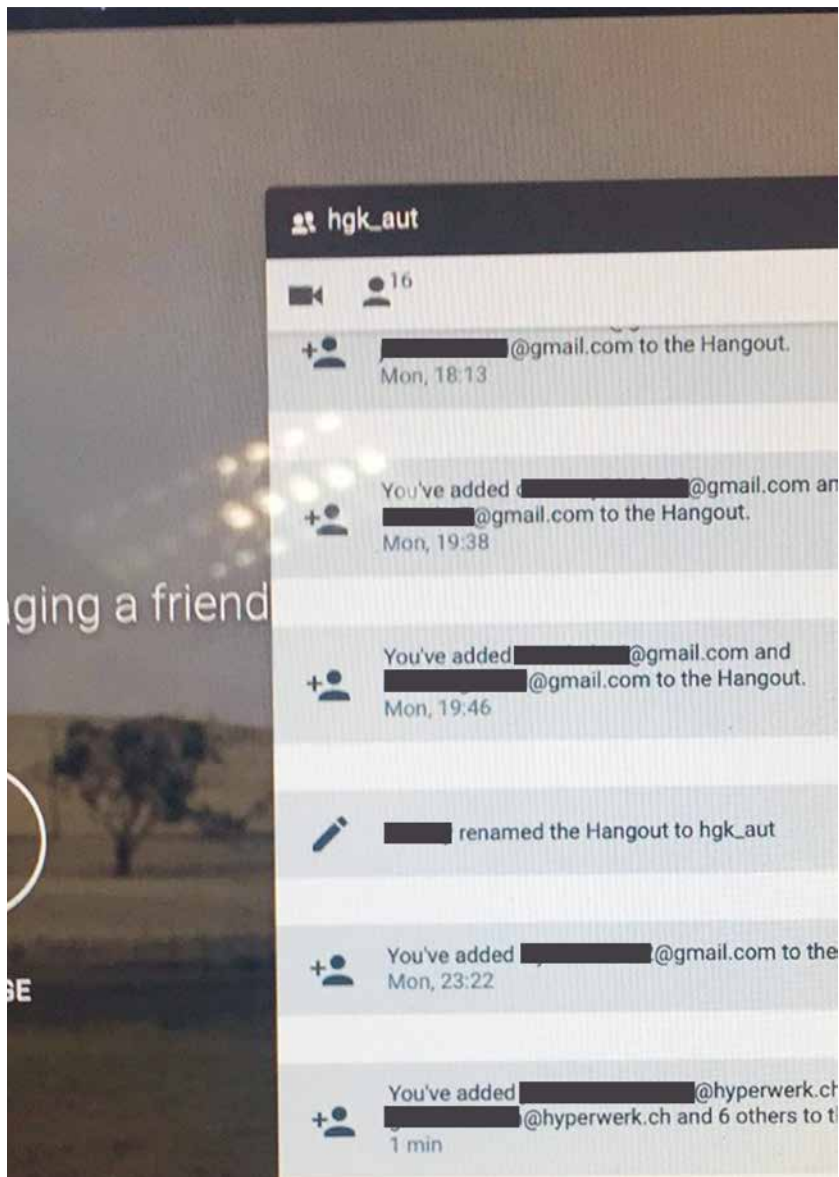
January. Basel, Switzerland: post from New Zealand! Fiona Amundsen and Dieneke Jansen sent a big envelope with postcards for each participant of their Swiss workshop. In a time of digital communication physical handwritten messages, which are becoming ever more rare, make an impact. The students were very much touched by this gesture. This symbolises the start of the »pen pal« exchange concept between two groups of art and design students living in two different parts of the world.

February. The project is taking place on two hemispheres and depends on different work and life rhythms. While in New Zealand it was term break, at HyperWerk we could use the course-free time to discuss and prepare how the Swiss student group would get in touch with the New Zealand group. Eight students chose a personalised medium and expressed in words, images, sounds and materials their interests and motivations. The work was mainly digital; only one piece was sent by post and took into consideration the standard delivery speed of up to three weeks. Throughout this process, waiting seemed different, and we realised how email communication had changed our sense of what it meant to be patient.

April. The HyperWerk material was presented to the New Zealand class, where a group of nine students were interested in participating in this collaboration: Lindsey De Roos, Meg Gosnell, Antti Hakuri, Eva-Rae Harris, Diana Hu, Jalesa Nomani, Masashi Tanaka, Paige Tregurtha, and Courtney Young. They presented themselves individually to the HyperWerk students through letters, films, photos and illustrations, as well as through links to their private social media accounts. Because we had decided upon an open process based on the idea of connection and care, with a large degree of autonomy for the students and the guiding but unobtrusive presence of lecturers in the background, we then experienced the complexity of not being able to see each other physically on a regular basis. We have to accept that all our group decisions come either after or before. We work with delay.

May. We agreed on a common playground, generated and maintained by both student groups, and opened private Instagram accounts. An initial series of hashtags – »I« / »WE« / »US« – would be complemented, over time, by new themes. With this system of collective visual immediacy everyone comes into contact with everyone else. Thoughts, inspirations, work, ideas are visually recorded and spontaneously commented on.

June. This is a month of uncertainty and distance for our exchange as the Winter semester in New Zealand and the Summer semester in Switzerland come to a term break. On both sides, the students are locally and intensively involved in much individual and group work. The distances feel so huge and our intention of having an open process so fragile. What is positive is that some personal



The students' »Hangout«. Screenshot, 2019

relationships have developed and seem to be leading to concrete work, but there is no space for an extensive group process.

July – August – September – October. At this stage of the project we wish to continue with our plan, which involves an exhibition in Auckland with the virtual participation of the Swiss group. There will then be a common publication followed by a final summing-up project presentation in Basel, with the virtual participation of the students from New Zealand.

In the course of this project we – students and lecturers – are experiencing the excitement, fragility and complexity of finding other ways of establishing a relationship to creative work practices. We feel mentally and physically what distances involve, and how digital communication technology enables and disables creativity. We are realising the potential and the limits of working together within different institutional structures and cultures. We are pursuing a practice of »friendly relationships« in order to explore the question:

*Can friendship be regarded and developed as a tactic or regarded as a technology for orienting within the world for the sake of a common cause that would encourage the growth and practice of a more ethical mode of living and acting together?*<sup>3</sup>

We are seeking answers within art and design practices that connect and care for and with each other.

### NOTES

1. For definitions of these concepts please see: <https://maoridictionary.co.nz>
2. This thinking draws on Estelle Ferrarese's essay *The Vulnerable and the Political: On the Seeming Impossibility of Thinking Vulnerability and the Political Together and Its Consequences* and Grant Kester's book *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context*.
3. London Design Biennale (2018). *Body of Us*. <http://bodyofus.ch/body-of-us> Accessed on: April 23, 2019.

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# THE EXPERIMENTAL CULTURAL SPACES

## HIMADRI HIREN GHOSH

In view of the need for global interaction, in 2017 our University began thinking about teaching courses on Indian *Cultural Spaces* which have traditional values that can be shared with those who are interested around the world.

Therefore, an experiment to evolve a cultural anthropology course at Banasthali University was developed. Banasthali University was formed in 1935 and is based on Gandhian Philosophy which considers the »*Globe as One Family*«. These essential Indian cultural values shall be roughly outlined in what follows:

## INDIAN CULTURE

Indian culture is a kaleidoscope enriching not only one's physical self but also one's soul. Every part of India is culturally unique and diverse, with respect to dwelling design, geography, lifestyle, daily rituals, festivities, weddings, arts and crafts, cuisine, ethno-religious practices, lore and human interactions. One can feel and relish this culture through a wide spectrum of such experiences.

The Indian populace revels in celebrations that herald various phases of nature or commemorate mythological heroes and divine beings. Witnessing traditional Indian wedding vows being taken is a touching experience. Enjoying Indian hospitality in modest home stays – whether it be in the salt desert of Kutch, or in the

high Himalayan mountains, or in the glens of Ooty – enables one to appreciate the unassuming, affectionate nature of rural folk.

Living in a craft village is an experience of a different kind. Life is not a humdrum affair in the least, but full of buzzing activities, with people attending to their domestic, pastoral and agricultural needs and then working on occupational crafts. Pastoral crafts are the most picturesque and beatific of all. Spending time watching the women of Kutch bestow all the beauty of their imagination onto the canvas of their fabric to create scenes of wonder is a unique aspect of learning that cannot ever be repeated.

Sustainability and beautification of the surroundings are ever-present features of Indian culture. Everything, from decorative rangolis to murals, from architectural details to traditional costumes and jewellery – and much more – is a soulful rendition of culture. As one delves beneath the surface, one uncovers more than one hopes to learn, as there abound stories, songs, mysteries, that open a long way to understanding the unfathomable culture of India.

Indian culture is felt and imbibed along with every little aspect that one comes across, observes, does, experiences – like trying to scoop delicious rasam (a spicy liquid dish in South India) with rice onto a banana leaf without spilling it; learning the dandiya raas (a folk dance of Gujarat played with adorned wooden sticks that provide rhythmic beats); or listening to women croon local songs as they go about their daily tasks.

Experiencing Indian systems of wellness such as yoga or a Kerala ayurvedic massage is also a truly physical-cultural experience as well as enhancing one's glow and igniting inner radiance. A visit to a museum is a must to see cultural artefacts and dioramas. When one visits India, one departs with a piece of the country embedded in the soul. Experiencing India's culture leaves one with a plethora of feelings that are indescribable.

In India, too, we are facing problems with digitalisation. Due to its advance and its reach into the interior regions of India and into even the smallest village, the Indian public is being exposed to all kinds of information, images and lifestyles. These in turn slowly dilute their own cultures and sources of traditional knowledge. The mobile has become a double-edged sword.

The mobile takes at least eight hours per day from our students, leaving only a few hours for their education. The University thought that Indian students require more relevant global exposure, and that one way to achieve this would be to offer courses for aspiring global citizens in which the interaction between Indian students would improve their exposure to their own cultures and lifestyles.

## THE COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course is open to any student over 18 from any part of India.

The course takes six months: In the first three months, the student will stay at the University, and in the last two and half months he or she will be at a specific cultural location. The last two weeks are reserved for the documentation process.

During the first three months, the student will study:

- the theory of cultural anthropology;
  - the diversity of Indian culture,
  - details of the diverse traditions and cultures of India.
- (This will have both theoretical and practical aspects.)

Thereafter, students will choose their area of interest and receive a placement in order to enhance their skills in and knowledge of these traditional cultural spaces. The time allotted for this activity is two and a half months, with two weeks allotted for documenting their experience and providing outcomes for its evaluation.

Suppose, for example, that a student wants to explore India through its vibrant craft sector. Then he or she would be placed with an NGO called Khamir in Bhuj (Gujarat) which deals with crafts in silver jewellery, utensils, pottery, leather, costumes, traditional textiles, embroidery etc. After a massive earthquake this NGO was given responsibility to care for local craftsmen and their work. The student would visit the remotest villages, be exposed to real situations, and work in spaces provided by Khamir. He or she would come to experience the complete lifestyle of the artisans and the ways in which they are able to create, think and manage to market their products.



**Five-Fold Education at Banasthali University.** Five-Fold Education includes five different aspects of life which not only help in understanding values but also imbibe the traditions of India. Banasthali Vidyapith aims at the synthesis of spiritual value of the East and scientific spirit of the West. The main thrust of all the activities of the Banasthali Vidyapith is the development of a complete personality. The institution firmly believes that the personality consists of interdependent components, each being equally important and requiring equal attention. A complete personality can only be developed through a wholesome education. The »Panchmukhi Shiksha« which has evolved from experimentation, attempts a balance among the five necessary aspects of education: Physical, Practical, Aesthetic, Moral and Intellectual. Source: <http://www.banasthali.org/banasthali/wcms/en/home/>



# REDESIGNING DESIGN EDUCATION

»Our task today is nothing less than the task of creating a form or a symbolization of the world. This seems to be to us the greatest risk that humanity has had to confront. But it may well be that it has already done so several times, perhaps even that the world itself has already done so several times. This is neither an abstract nor purely a formal task – whether this word is taken esthetically or logically. It is the extremely concrete and determined task – a task that can only be a struggle – of posing the following question to each gesture, each conduct, each *habitus* and each *ethos*: How do you engage the world?«

Jean-Luc Nancy

# EDUCATIONAL SCENARIOS

## REGINE HALTER

**PRELIMINARY REMARKS** Almost every university offers its students excursions which last several days. They are neither orientated towards nor sufficient for dealing with cultural difference in communal work and approaching other cultures of use, of production, and of understanding. Therefore, it is hardly possible to experience what acting locally actually implies.

The same holds true for semesters spent abroad. Their status remains that of an autobiographical peculiarity. Working experiences provided in them and ensuing changes in designerly perspectives are not methodically reviewed, hence no results of such a reflection can be integrated into the courses of study.

Therefore, the question is how such quite unusual events in students' educational biographies can be integrated into daily educational practice, and how they can do justice to the subject matters taken as themes in this publication. In what follows, scenarios for an educational practice are discussed which can facilitate students' active and reflexive concern with design perspectives in the context of globalisation. These considerations arose from the work on the research project *Cultural Spaces and Design. Prospects of Design Education*. For reasons of financial support, the scenarios were orientated towards the educational structure of the Academy of Art and Design FHNW in Basel. However, they can apply beyond this local framework.

One aspect of the discussion is the feasibility of the scenarios. It's true that the curricular structures of many universities are a problem as they portion their teaching offers or modules as consecutive learning steps within a strictly outlined curriculum. With regard to the scenarios presented here, this structural guideline can be circumvented only in particular formats. This means that their implementation ought to be accompanied by the critical revision and alteration of structural guidelines.

## FOCUSES: MATERIAL-, PROBLEM-, AND DISCOURSE-ORIENTATION

For the *International Workshops* in Banasthali, Gaborone, and Canberra, the focuses chosen as orientation were *problem*, *material*, and *discourse*. They turned out to make very good sense, and they allow of a more precise design and application of modules and subject matters.

Thus, implementation of activities with the focuses *material-* and *problem-orientation* is appropriate primarily in international exchange or with the participation of experts as guest teachers from the respective foreign country. What matters here is an understanding of cultural difference in terms of individually chosen materials, techniques, and design strategies, and in order to gain this understanding what needs to happen is working on things on the spot or illustration and information from guest teachers. The necessary preparation for international activities, however, is independent of this; it can take place also without guest teachers.

*Discourse-orientation* is a focus which can initially be pursued without direct connection to international activities. It can be integrated quite easily into the segmented modular structures characterised above as problematic.

Primarily, *discourse-orientation* serves to gather knowledge of other, foreign life-worlds, of their cultural history, presence, their artefacts, design strategies etc. The workshops and seminars realised by the project team *Cultural Spaces and Design* focused on the influence of students' own cultural imprints on the practical and theoretical work in their respective courses of studies. Thus, the workshops were *discourse-oriented* although they contained practical exercises. Nonetheless, in the evaluation of these workshops, the main question was whether and how, while the students were working on a topic or a question, the workshops could stimulate an appreciation of the relative status of students' own positions, a contextualisation of their own cultural provenance, and thus a change of perspective. International activities with the focus *discourse-orientation* provide additional and qualitatively different levels of concern with these questions since ›the other side‹ can be directly involved in the process of self-reflection, i.e. the students of the hosting university are active as well in this reflexive process. Above all, however, these settings offer the opportunity of re-evaluating knowledge gained before from a critical distance. Clearly, the *discourse-oriented* modules yield an intensive preparation for stays abroad. There is a wide variety of subject matters to deal with in these modules, such as the following:

*General themes*

- Globalisation as a question of design
- Relationships between local and global resources
- Forms of cultural transfer
- Image of oneself/image of the other
- Cultural anthropology, cultural history, cultural theory
- Material culture
- Methods and the critique of methods



- History of design/history of colonisation
- Postcolonial societies
- Concepts of identity

#### *Practically oriented themes*

- (Self-)documentation as reflexive tool
- Material investigations and research
- Artefact analysis
- Knowledge of other crafts which are perhaps no longer practiced in one's own culture and their perspectives
- Design ethnography/culture-specific artefacts
- Culture-specific design strategies
- Culture-specific design tools
- Culture-specific forms of narration and non-verbal communication
- Tacit knowledge as a stage for design action
- Forms of cooperation/teamwork
- Design vs crafts

From this limited yet scalable set of fundamental themes emerge subgroups which in turn open into thematically focused content for teaching and learning.

## INTERDISCIPLINARITY

The Academy of Art and Design (HGK) in Basel is part of a greater structure, namely the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland, which comprises also other universities. The Academy of Art and Design itself consists of ten disciplinary fields with diverse teaching plans and educational practices. This structure – which can be encountered also at other universities – suggested to the research team to present the layout of the subject matters to be discussed here as an additional and, above all, interdisciplinary offer to the students. This suggests itself wherever it is possible to link distinctly different disciplines (e.g. industrial design, design, art, fashion design, crafts, liberal arts etc.) with different levels of qualification (Bachelor, Master, PhD). This approach requires a platform which offers classes for students of all disciplines and thus facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration. At the HGK Basel, such a platform exists already and could be set up also at other universities.

This kind of situation yields a considerable advantage for implementing *discourse-oriented* modules insofar as variable subject matters become possible. Furthermore, this approach provides space for new impulses within the dynamism and complexity of the *Globalisation and Design* theme, impulses which can be offered, interpreted and communicated in different ways depending on the teacher.

Finally, this shape of the *discourse-oriented* module facilitates working on the above-mentioned themes from very different perspectives and design interests.

## SATELLITES

The interest expressed by other international institutions in *Cultural Spaces and Design* and the contributions they made at their respective home institutions to the final colloquium *Globalisation is a Design Issue* held in 2017 were summarised by the project team under the title *Satellites*. This concept referred to contributions to the project which expanded the original agenda and had to do with the design-driven engagement of students and lecturers from different institutions in Canada and New Zealand the common theme of water. These students and teachers worked at their respective home universities. Finally, they came to the conclusive colloquium in Basel and presented their results for discussion with all our project partners.

They produced a wide variety of approaches to concept, design and solutions – approaches both possible and desirable for a topic of global significance. In addition, the implementation and the post-colloquium evaluation of this kind of work opened up a perspective onto an internationally oriented educational format that extended the discussions and active exchanges concerning individual questions beyond institutional boundaries as well as beyond individual perspectives and design approaches.

In a very pragmatic sense, this format of *Satellites* also represented an excellent opportunity for sustainably dealing with the educational goals pursued in this project.

The *International Workshops* as they were realised during the course of the project *Cultural Spaces and Design* remain either a part or an option of a design education as it is envisioned here, depending on the funding situation.

Since the *International Workshops* entail significant and recurring acquisition costs for the universities – despite the students' financial contribution – they cannot be expected to continue in this form. Due to these costs, a stay abroad is usually too short to come to grips with a foreign culture. A stay abroad therefore is always in danger of being little more than a form of cultural tourism and can only be half compensated for by a »return visit« from the corresponding foreign group.

For these reasons, we used the concept of *Satellite* to establish a sensible and financially feasible practice for groups of students and thereby allow of a *longer-term international collaboration on questions of mutual interest*. They may kick off a sustained collaboration via e.g. Skype or other kinds of digital exchanges.

Furthermore, wherever the respective home university may be, this format offers the advantage of providing its own networking opportunities over this collaborative period of research, work and study. Another advantage is the opportunity of presenting and discussing the results – and also of acknowledging the relevant cultural differences – at a conclusive colloquium at a location convenient for all participants. In addition, the consequences for design work may be drawn, and these insights shall be integrated again into further education.

Based on the example of the final colloquium *Globalisation is a Design Issue*, a longer phase of digital exchange, collaboration and data transfer can be concluded with an »analogue« meeting, perhaps in the format of a summer school. Holding such

meetings at shorter intervals is feasible depending, again, on financial resources, but in practice this will be realistic largely in the context of longer-term cooperation – running, for example, over an entire academic year.

In terms of the *Satellite* our main focus is on *continuity* in the communication and collaboration with other design cultures during which the development of our own culturally immanent ideas on a given theme may be given more time. This should have a substantially positive effect on the engagement with the processes and results of other groups in other countries in that one's own position becomes more precisely articulated in language (is ›objectified‹) and can therefore be reflected upon.

Thus, the format of *Satellite* can be an alternative to relatively short, one-off and therefore not really meaningful working meetings with students from other cultures. In the evaluation of the *International Workshops* (in Banasthali, Gaborone, Canberra) it became clear that, for particular subject matters, longer stays abroad and collaboration with local staff are something to continue striving for. Given this significance, other initiatives may therefore be appropriate. For example, individual students from participating institutions may take a semester abroad and act as intercultural communicators in the host country.

The concept of the *Satellites* – in the sense of a feasible format suitable also for *problem-* as well as for *materially-oriented* collaborations – complies with the interest in an international collaboration that is as steady as possible. Moreover, organisational preparations for *Satellite* are easier to cope with than those for *International Workshops*. Such work may also be taken on by students if it leads to an increase in acquired skills. This format is also financially more plausible since travel and accommodation costs can be drawn from international grants, i.e. they are not just dependent on national or institutional sources.

## INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOPS

Despite the effort regarding staff and material, *International Workshops* should be realised. Only through being on the spot and working together with local people can significant insights be won, e.g. the concrete meaning of water and the ensuing design challenges – which became obvious especially in Botswana; coming to terms with other cultures of production, usage, and understanding; comprehending the real, factual requirements for cooperation; experiencing what is implied by acting locally – and not least an approximation to an understanding of globalisation itself as a design task.

In a purely *discourse-oriented* approach, the cosmos of one's own cultural perspectives, methods, value systems etc. may well become the object of purely theoretical reflection, but as dispositions informing one's practical work they will largely remain. Nevertheless, at a tertiary institute characterised by practically oriented education, this dimension should at least be made available as a supplementary option to a *discourse-oriented* module practice. Ultimately, it is also a matter of keeping our

promise that the students will acquire well-grounded competencies in intercultural collaboration in the course of their study.

On the other hand, experiences from teaching and module practice reviewed by teachers and students may form the basis for an *ongoing process of development* intended to produce new foci for the shape of the module. Thus, the most recent developments can feed into the different versions of the module, or the particular demands of concrete project plans can be taken into account.

However, study within the framework of the subject matters set out in the profile of *discourse-orientation* is but *one* – albeit indispensable – side of the educational praxis at which this project aims. This implies that, besides the aspects listed, experiences acquired with or in other cultures – e.g. in the documentation process – will feed back into the design education at the local university. Such experiences, however, can only be made by those who leave their familiar environment.

Within the framework of the research project *Cultural Spaces and Design*, the *International Workshops* were also test runs of an augmented design education. Their critical evaluation yielded relevant aspects, which are outlined in the following:

- On the one hand, it became obvious that it was crucial to be on location in order to gain an understanding of the problems – something that became clear during the project week in Botswana but also at other locations where the *International Workshops* took place. On the other hand, this format has a disadvantage in that a short time frame is not sufficient to engage properly with the issues at hand. Until now, however, longer stays have only been possible through a semester abroad on an individual basis. For this reason, the *Travel Kit* and the complementary blog *Travelogue* were developed initially only on the basis of individual trips. It would be perfectly plausible, however, to use them for group situations as well.
- Workshops realised abroad should be followed by at least another one at home as a ›return visit‹. – Following this insight, three workshops took place in Basel in June 2017, held by the international partners Richie Moalosi, Himadri Ghosh, and Gilbert Riedelbauch. Although the workshops could not, for financial reasons, be an identical mirroring with regard to the student participants, the decision to hold *International Workshops* in Basel also with reduced ›line-up followed the idea to achieve an equilibrium with regard to the perception of cultural spaces. Another – secondary – benefit was the laying of a foundation for future cooperations.
- Workshop experiences can be strongly shaped by mutual allocations of roles, clichés, and projective exotisations. Since this may release a great potential for self-reflection, there should be enough space for exchange and dialogue during the stay abroad.
- Over and above the individual reflections in the documentations, the subsequent assessments of group travels abroad shall be complemented by further meetings back home.



- The intensive preparation of travels abroad – as an individual or as a group – has proved to be most useful. Vice versa, this holds true also for the hosting universities or for the international project partners.
- In the preparations, besides information being provided about the other culture, a focus should be put on formulating one's own expectations. A significant role in this context plays the letter of motivation, which serves to choose the students for the trip abroad. Various aspects of preparations for travels abroad were considered in the development of the *Travel Kit* and of the complementary *Travelogue*.
- The teaching persons should bring up their own experiences with other cultures.

This last point concerns the necessary intensity as well as the particular form applied to coaching the students, since this coaching entails a debate about changes in perspectives and in design strategies (not only among students). Anka Falk's following explanations about coaching and supervision are concerned with the corresponding requirements.

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# MULTIPLYING WORLDS IN DESIGN EDUCATION. PERSPECTIVES ON COACHING AND SUPERVISION

## ANKA FALK INTRODUCTION

Exploring cultural spaces offers multiple learning possibilities – but this learning process needs guidance. If this guidance happens, a student's journey can trigger growth on a personal as much as on a professional level. In this article, I summarise our experiences with coaching and supervision while we were working on the project *Cultural Spaces and Design*.

Supervision and coaching<sup>1</sup> are used in various forms in design education. In this text, the focus is on occasions where cultural issues play a role, such as coaching related to the Travel Kit<sup>2</sup>, or coaching and supervision during international workshops. Distant coaching and coaching of projects related to cultural identities will be briefly mentioned as well.

## COACHING WHILE WORKING WITH THE TRAVEL KIT

Applying the Travel Kit surely needs guidance before, during, and after a student's travel. A journal kept while traveling proved to be only a starting point. The coach has the task of identifying relevant issues in the material provided by the student. This is an individual process. Here, the thematic fields of exploration (cultural spaces, material culture, you yourself, the Other, interaction, journaling; see the related article in this volume) can be of use. These thematic fields can act as a guideline for the coach as well as for the student: Which topic is the student working on? What is her experience rooted in? Where is she challenged on a personal level, where on a professional? The navigation between the personal, the cultural and the professional as mentioned in the description of the Travel Kit needs to be taken up in coaching in order to find a good balance.

Special attention should be paid to the stage of preparations for a stay abroad: letters of motivation and research questions from students indicate what kind of projections and expectations they have and how open they are for a cultural encounter. This can be discussed and adjusted by further questions. In the same way, the final documen-

tation provides a variety of opportunities for reflection which is often not possible while staying abroad.

## SUPERVISION AND COACHING DURING INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOPS

International workshops are a well-established practice in design education. Their benefit can be multiplied if coaching or supervision is offered. This is our experience with the workshop *Crafts and Design Cultures* held in Banasthali in January 2016 and earlier described in this volume.

In this workshop, coaching and supervision were applied in several ways. Coaching of students took place by lecturers on site and by me via Skype. Supervision of the workshop conductresses Tatiana Tavares and Eliane Gerber as her assistant.

## SUPERVISING WORKSHOP CONDUCTORS

As the workshop was prepared by me but held by Tatiana Tavares with the help of Eliane Gerber, supervision was used to convey the necessary contextual knowledge from preliminary meetings and achieve the smoothest possible implementation of the workshop. In addition to that, I had a deeper knowledge of Indian culture than my colleagues, who had not visited the country before, and therefore was able to act as an agent for supporting mutual understanding.

Supervision in this case meant that I prepared guidelines for conducting the workshop and supporting students with choosing a focus for their documentation as a final assignment.<sup>3</sup> I had worked out a set of cultural issues that I expected to come up when working on crafts in India.<sup>4</sup> This made it easier to identify in what a student was most engaged. Supervision also involved several Skype calls which included a collective reflection on key situations in which cultural differences posed a particular challenge (e.g. with respect to roles and hierarchies, different conceptions of teaching and learning, differences in directing the process etc). This allowed all participants to raise their awareness of the challenges coming up in a workshop setting like this and react by acknowledging conflicting lines rather than just acting them out.

## COACHING WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Student coaching during (and after) the workshop aimed at encouraging students to reflect their experiences and support them in choosing and focusing on a topic for their individual assignments. Ultimately, however, coaching enabled an insight into how students experienced the workshop week, into the challenges they faced, and where a potential for learning and reframing emerged. In this way, coaching allowed insights into the impact of the workshop setting.

The Swiss students also had an opportunity to have a coaching session with Prof. Ghosh from Banasthali, which many of them took, especially for discussing diploma projects. This allowed them to experience a very different style of coaching and get feedback from a different cultural perspective. It proved to be a remarkable experience.



For the coaching sessions it was important to know which of the rich experiences of visiting India, getting to know Banasthali Campus, and participating in the workshop would be most relevant to the student. Learning is then at its deepest if we are personally involved and moved. Therefore, the chosen focus and research questions were set aside if a student started talking about what really mattered to her in that particular moment. Interestingly enough, it was less the content and subject of the workshop that was important for most participants. Rather, it was the setting itself, the encounter with Indian students and staff, the campus, the cultural perspective and understanding of design that were the key experiences. The students' responses to the setting appeared in the coaching processes and can be summarised as follows: immersing in and acquiring foreign crafts and materials, reflecting while creating (transferring a craft to one's own cultural context, critical reflection on manufacturing processes and objects, exotisation, the attempt to decode objects and their design, focus on social aspects (focussing on what connects us rather than on cultural difference), intuitive imagery, dealing with differences in hierarchy, role assignment, time, quality standards and aesthetics. In coaching, these issues could be mirrored and discussed. Becoming aware of their own way of seeing then inspired the design process of students. In any case, a longer period of support after the workshop proved necessary to enable them to integrate their experiences into their products and processes. For the coaching, it is crucial to allow any reaction to the foreign culture, even if it may not be politically correct. Only if there is no need to pretend some kind of cosmopolitan being-above-it-all, learning can take place. The coaching session should be a safe space.

## FURTHER COACHING EXPERIENCES

### CULTURAL ORIGIN OR IDENTITY AS A POINT OF DEPARTURE

Some students' projects as well as the locations in which they are implemented have their origin in cultural identities and biographies of students.<sup>5</sup> It is they who select their own cultural heritage or identity as the point of departure for their projects. These projects show a dual relevance in that, on the one hand, they might develop innovative design solutions for local problems. On the other hand, the self-conception of designers might move towards a transcultural standpoint. They might become bridge-builders between different cultural spaces. Despite their high potential, these projects might challenge students not only on a professional but also on a personal level<sup>6</sup>, depending on their biography. As coaches, we can be aware of the chances and challenges and guide the students through them.

### DISTANT COACHING

Today, distant coaching has become an established practice given that it is common for students and teachers to have stays abroad. It was also widely used during the research project. On the one hand, it allows for continuous guidance of a student, which can be especially valuable in a foreign environment. However, distant coach-

ing entails several risks which can jeopardise the success of such instruction: design drafts or products can be displayed on screen but not held in the hand. Physical contact is replaced by sound and image. Information might get lost in space. Working relationships established in advance have proven useful here. It also helps if student and coach are able to use their intuition, which can bridge distances in a surprising way. In any case, supplementary coaching on site by a qualified teacher, researcher or practitioner should be organised.

## TOWARDS A CULTURALLY SENSITIVE COACHING IN DESIGN EDUCATION

Behind these considerations about coaching and supervision is a vision of what may be called a *culturally sensitive coaching in design education*. The goal of a culturally sensitive coaching is, above all, to pick out and incorporate cultural aspects of design wherever they occur, be it in ›daily business‹ when students choose topics related to their cultural identity, be it when they spend time abroad, or when we create international workshop settings.

The point of departure is often a specific design project that leads to engagement with a cultural space, a material culture, an intercultural collaboration, a foreign other, or with one's own cultural identity. Doing the work one might fall into typical reactions to cultural difference, such as exoticism, stereotyping, projections, homogenisation of difference, culture shock, incomprehension, or colonialist patterns of behaviour. Culturally sensitive coaching in design education needs to respond to these issues, to stimulate a learning process in the mutual reflections of both coach and coachee and thus contribute to a culturally sensitive design practice. This means that teachers and students need to be capable of identifying and describing local and global design cultures with their specific attributes and values, realising imbalances of power, mechanisms of marginalisation, discrimination and Othering in design processes and products. Further issues to be considered are: differences in understanding the goal and purpose of design; differences in the market mechanisms for design products; differences in production; attitudes to resources; problems and requirements; aesthetics and conceptions of quality; narratives; usage; imagery and symbols; processes of interaction; differences in attitudes to design, in the use of media and methods, and even in the perception of what we should understand by design.

A design pedagogy that is aware of cultural implications can contribute to diversity and the preservation of design cultures as well as to a design ethos that respects different life-worlds around the globe. Culture-sensitive coaching might help multiply worlds in design education, just like we were intended to do this in museums.<sup>7</sup>

## NOTES

1. In English, the guidance of students is often referred to as supervision. In German, the term supervision is mostly used to refer to the guidance of teachers. To distinguish coaching of students and supervision of teachers in this article, we stick to the German use of the term. At HyperWerk, students are guided throughout the academic year by a coach with whom learning goals and progress are discussed. The focus is on the mutually agreed educational goals of the student as well as on the milestones to be achieved for that year. Coach and coachee meet roughly every six weeks. A similar approach applies also to the Masterstudio Design in Basel.
  2. For more information about the *Travel Kit* see the specific article in this volume.
  3. For a short description of the assignment, see the workshop report.
  4. For example crafts and gender, crafts and globalisation, crafts and social structures, and so on.
  5. See e.g. the contribution by Niku Alex Muçaj or Amardeep Shergill in this volume.
  6. The relatedness of person, cultural and professional level is explored more deeply in the article about the *Travel Kit* in this volume.
  7. *»Because in the end, the idea [of a museum] today is to bring the world into contact with the world, to bring some of the world's places into contact with other of the world's places [...] We must multiply the number of worlds inside museums.«* Édouard Glissant, cited after: Obrist H. U. (2012). *Le 21ième siècle est Glissant*. dOCUMENTA (13): 100 Notes – 100 Thoughts, No 38.
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# GLOBALISATION IS A DESIGN ISSUE. CONCLUDING REMARKS

## REGINE HALTER

Education (not only) in design would have to cultivate over and above all the capability for observation, for perception, for attention towards things and towards the world. This should have become clear through this publication. It is only then, through meticulously accurate, concrete, and insistent questioning of the commonplace that design can intervene into social, economic, ecological, cultural systems and provide possibilities of using objects and structures of various complexity in altered ways.

Read against this backdrop, reports, studies, documentations, considerations about the methodical implications of an altered design education condense into a pleading for the opening and perceiving of new experiential spaces where designerly curiosity can develop and flourish, away from beaten paths.

If the question were asked what, in detail, the students' acquired competences are, then the answer would be: apart from practical and theoretical understanding, an insight into how important it is to recognize and appreciate difference as a most productive force. This is neither about homogenisation nor about integration – however kind-hearted – of the other into one's own life-world; rather, it is about the novel perception that there is an other, and to recognition and acceptance of this other. This »competence« – if we want to call it that – corresponds to the capability of taking a seat between (invitingly positioned) chairs, to accept open ends and not having to weave them into some well-known pattern.

Put pragmatically: internationalisation of design teams is becoming ever more common practice. How can this work be fruitful if there is no opportunity to gain the insight that design does not follow the same motives and reasons all over the world, does not stand in the same context everywhere, and does not everywhere meet the same requirements and needs?

Compare the research attitude that goes with this insight to that of a laboratory. In order to avoid merely emblematic correctness – into which concepts like

*interdisciplinary* or *integrative* can easily trick one – one aspect of the laboratory shall be emphasised here which comes closest to this capability of thinking and acting in new references and relations.

In the context of the revisions of the commonplace attempted in this book, the laboratory should be understood according to another image, if the place is not meant to be a mere posture but rather itself the *modus operandi* of design.

The Latin word *labor*, meaning »struggle, toil, work«, can be understood through an extension<sup>1</sup> as »to stagger under a load« – which is contained in *labor* and is related to the verb *labare* – »to stagger, to sway« – as well as to *labi*, meaning »to slide, to slip, to stumble«. In the twentieth century, *labile* was derived from this and means »wavering, changeable, uncertain, unreliable«.

According to this reading, the most stable starting point would be *lability*, i.e. the struggle with ever unreliable, wavering conditions of design – and not the unreflected updating, the seasonally varied orchestrations of the old modes of working and disciplinary knowledge. Thus, *lability* becomes the resource and the precondition for a dynamism in which creative milieus can develop.

How can design live up to the complexity of the world? – This is and (happily) remains the question to be asked always anew.

## NOTE

1. I owe the etymologically unorthodox reading of »laboratory« to the publicist and cultural politician Hermann Glaser.

July 2011 he is Artistic Director of DAZ – Deutsches Architektur Zentrum – in Berlin. His think-tank *raumtaktik* deals with spatial intelligence and interventions. Since 2016 he is a partner in *urbanegestalt, office for landscape, architecture and urban planning* (Cologne, Germany).

**ANKA FALK** holds a Master of Arts in Rhetoric and Educational Sciences. Since 2007 she has worked in design education, teaching rhetoric, design theory and methodology at the Institute HyperWerk and the Masterstudio (Basel), the School of Visual Arts (Bern), the Design Department of IIT (Hyderabad, India) and other universities. From 2007 to 2009 she was co-head of HyperWerk. From 2014-2017 she was research associate with the project *Cultural Spaces and Design*. She has arranged conferences and exhibitions and edited publications in cooperation with HyperWerk and institutions such as the Museum der Kulturen, Basel, and the Theatre of Freiburg, Germany.

**NORA FANKHAUSER** was born in Switzerland and has lived in Accra, Paris, Cairo and Zurich. After first professional experiences as a flight attendant she studied at the Institute HyperWerk and now holds a Bachelor's degree in Post-Industrial Design. Nora Fankhauser lives and works in London. She will soon begin her Master's in Urban Design at the Bartlett School of Architecture.

**BENJAMIN FURRER** is a self-employed »craftsman« and 50% househusband. He lives and works in Basel. He completed a Bachelor of Art in Literary Writing at Biel in 2018.

**HIMADRI HIREN GHOSH** is Director of the Banasthali Institute of Design, which combines traditional heritage with the present-day needs of design education. He holds a PhD from the Faculty of Engineering, Department of Textile Technology, Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda; a Post Graduate Diploma in Textile Design from the National Institute of Design; and a B.A. in Fine Arts. He also graduated from B. Tex and M. Tex courses at Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda. He has decades of experience as a teacher as well as practitioner, *inter alia*, in craft design and design technology, structural design, planning and quality control, woven and non-woven knitware, as well as in many kinds of printing technologies. He is affiliated to numerous organisations worldwide.

**REGINE HALTER** worked until her retirement in 2015 as one of the heads of the HyperWerk Institute and of the Integrative Design / Masterstudio Institute. She holds a PhD in Media Sciences, Philosophy, and Political Science. Since 1999 she has lectured in and taught media and design theory, areas in which she holds her professorship. In her former career she was actively involved, *inter alia*, as theatre dramaturge, and as general secretary and project director of the Deutscher Werkbund, conceiving and organising exhibitions and international conferences on design. Regine Halter has also been active as an author, co-author and editor. Her interests lie in the changes in human Perception by and through digitalisation; globalisation in design; cross-cultural studies, and inter-cultural collaborations.

**CHRISTIAN HOLLIGER** finished his Bachelor's degree in Process Design at the Institute HyperWerk in 2018. He had previously been interested in skilled craftwork and had built a traditional wooden sailing boat in Norway. Today Christian Holliger works as a trainee with *Hotel Regina*, an art collective, that along with *brunnen gehen* invented the profession of fountain-heater and which also sails on pumped-storage reservoirs. At the moment he is doing a course on gender-reflected men's work.

**DIENEKE JANSEN** is an Auckland-based artist whose practice employs tensions between site responsive interventions, performative actions and documentary practices, linking activism and precarious dwelling with the material and social support of the art world through exhibition practice and off-site events. Jansen was awarded the CK12 artist residency in Rotterdam in 2012, the New Zealand National Contemporary Art Award in 2013, and was invited to do work for the Jakarta Biennale in 2015. Her 2015-2016 *Dwelling on the Stoeep* projects focused on the socio-political spatiality of »failed« housing projects in Jakarta, Amsterdam and Auckland. Since 2013 Jansen has worked with a community fighting gentrification resulting in the multi-platform exhibition projects *G.I. Areas A&B*, and *90 DAYS\**. – Dieneke Jansen is a senior lecturer in Visual Arts at AUT University, New Zealand.

**BETTINA KÖHLER** studied art history, classical archaeology and urban planning in Bonn, where she also obtained her doctorate. She first worked in the Architecture Department

## APPENDIX

### AUTHORS

**FIONA AMUNDSEN** is an Aotearoa / New Zealand-based artist and educator. She utilises photography and video to explore relationships between military nuclear technologies, military capitalism, nuclear environmental destruction- and spirituality. She is interested in how a camera can be used to invite human-to-human connections and relationships, thereby enabling more conscious forms of embodied ethical listening and witnessing. These ideas of care and ethics are also explored in her teaching practice. Fiona Amundsen is Senior Lecturer in the School of Art and Design (AUT University); she has exhibited and held residencies / fellowships in New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Australia, the United States, and Europe. In 2019 she was awarded a Fulbright New Zealand Scholar Award.

**LEYLA BELKAÏD NERL** is director of the Fashion Design programme and assistant professor of Anthropology and Design at Parsons Paris (The New School, NYC). She received her PhD in Anthropology from the University of Lyon. She served as Head of the Product Design department and Director of Fashion Design for the Geneva School of Art and Design – HEAD, and later as Founding Director of the Master's in Luxury Management at the Geneva School of Business Administration. She published the books *Algéroises: Histoire d'un Costume Méditerranéen* (Edisud), *Voiles*. Paris, (Editions Vestipolis), and numerous other books and essays on design process, fashion and dress in the Mediterranean world.

**MATTHIAS BÖTTGER** is an architect and curator. Since 2017 he is professor and Head of the Institute HyperWerk in Basel. From 2012 to 2017 he was Professor for Sustainable Architecture at the Kunstuniversität Linz (Austria). He was a fellow at the Akademie Schloss Solitude in Stuttgart, in 2008 curator of *Updating Germany* at the Venice Biennale, and in 2013 curator of *We Brazil! Nos Brazil!* at the Biennale São Paulo. Since



at the ETH Zurich as a research assistant and then as an assistant professor in the History of Architectural Theory. Since 2006 she has been Professor of Art and Cultural History at the HGK Basel. Her work bridges the divide between practice and theory; it investigates the history and current meaning of comfort, functionality and aesthetic atmosphere in architecture, interiors and textiles and proposes that climate and culture should be thought together.

**LARISSA LANG** completed a Master's in Art in Public Spheres at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts after finishing at the Institute HyperWerk. She works in theatre education.

**LEA LEUENBERGER** is an advertising and font designer who completed her studies in Postindustrial Design at the Institute HyperWerk in 2016. Her final-year Bachelor's project focused on being itinerant and on ›leisurely travel«. Using analogue photography and multimedia installations she displayed the records of her travels at various exhibitions. Lea has been a self-employed designer since 2017. Currently she is working as scenographer for *Bravo Ricky GmbH* and runs an alpine pub together with friends in Graubünden.

**ODIRELENG MAROPE** is a lecturer in Graphic Design and Multimedia in the Department of Industrial Design and Technology at the University of Botswana. He holds a Masters in 2D and Digital Design from Edith Cowen University, a Bachelor of Education in Secondary Education from Edith Cowen University, and a Diploma in Secondary Education from Molepolole College of Education. His specialisation and research interest areas are in graphic design, technology and design education, and ethnic cultural identity and sustainability. He has presented papers at peer-reviewed conferences and published several book chapters.

**GABRIEL MEISEL** BA in Social Work, BA in Process Design. Since 2016 socio-cultural communicator with the *Mobile Youthwork Service* of Basel/Riehen. Gabriel Meisel works on various transdisciplinary multimedia projects and is active with the organisations *ZurBleibe* and *Oro Negro*. Since 2019 he has been studying for a Master's in film at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts.

**RICHIE MOALOSI** is a Professor of Industrial Design and the Head of the Department of Industrial Design and Technology at the University of Botswana. He completed his PhD in Industrial Design at Queensland University of Technology, and his Master of Arts in Design at Wolverhampton University of Technology. He has been an external examiner for both undergraduate and postgraduate studies for more than ten universities. His research interests are in design education, design and culture, and design and sustainability. He has published extensively in international peer-reviewed journals, presented peer-reviewed conference papers and published numerous book chapters. He has published four books.

**CARLOS MONTANA-HOYOS** is a Founding Associate Professor, Dubai Institute of Design and Innovation DIDI, United Arab Emirates. He is a Colombian/Australian who has lived in Italy, Japan, Singapore and currently the UAE. An award-winning designer and academic with interests in interdisciplinary and cross-cultural design, he was Course Convenor of Industrial Design at the University of Canberra (UC), Australia, and previously Assistant Professor at the National University of Singapore and of Product Design Engineering at EAFIT University in Colombia. A recipient of the Japan Government Scholarship, he graduated *cum laude* with a Master's and PhD from Kobe Design University. At UC he received two *Vice Chancellor's Awards* for teaching and the ACUADS national *Distinguished Teaching Award*, together with Lisa Scharoun.

**NIKU ALEX MUÇAJ** was born in Albania. He lives and works in Basel where, until 2012, he studied at the Institute HyperWerk and the Institute of Art HGK FHNW. His work has been shown at the *Biennale di Architettura di Venezia* (2012; 2014), *Tirana Ekspres* (2012), *Kunst Raum Riehen* (2012), and *Culturescapes* (2013). In his work Niku Alex Muçaj primarily engages with social processes and creative strategies. Niku Alex Muçaj is co-founder of *MAT (Media Art Tirana)* and a partner of *Transbazar's Laboratory Albania*.

**LUKAS OPPLER** studied Postindustrial Design at the Institute HyperWerk. Since 2016 he has worked as a freelance designer in the areas of web design, book design and

programming. One of the many topics he covered during his studies was intercultural cooperation. Lukas Oppler pursued this interest after completing his degree, particularly through his engagement in the area of migration. This work requires an ability to collaborate with others and continually leads to unexpectedly positive results.

**GILBERT RIEDELBAUCH** worked as a Senior Lecturer at the Australian National University's School of Art & Design where he convened the school's Coursework Master's Programmes and headed its first-year Foundation Courses. He holds qualifications from the Academy of Visual Arts, Nürnberg, Germany and the Australian National University. During his academic career, he has received numerous awards for his contributions to higher education in Australia. He is a Senior Fellow of The Higher Education Academy. Since 2018, Riedelbauch has solely focused on his designer/maker practice, based at his Canberra studio. He exhibits nationally and internationally, and his works are included in major local and national collections.

**NATALIE ROBERTSON (NG TI POROU, CLANN DHÒNNCHAIHDH)** born Kawerau, Aotearoa/ New Zealand. – Natalie Robertson is an artist and Senior Lecturer at AUT University, Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland). Robertson's research and artistic practice draws on historic archives and Ngāti Porou oral customs, exploring Māori knowledge practices, environmental issues, and cultural landscapes in order to engage relationships to place. – Robertson photographed extensively for the multi-award-winning book *A Whakapapa of Tradition: One Hundred Years of Ngāti Porou Carving, 1830–1930*, written by Ngarino Ellis (2016) which won *The Judith Binney Best First Book Award* for Illustrated Non-Fiction in the 2017 Ockham New Zealand Book Awards. She recently exhibited in *To Make/ Wrong/Right/Now – Honolulu Biennial 2019*.

**LISA SCHAROUN** is Head of School, Queensland University of Technology (QUT), Australia. A multi-award winning academic and designer with expertise in Visual Communications and Cross-Cultural Design, she received a Master of Arts from Central Saint Martins (UAL) and a PhD from Griffith University. Roles include Senior Lecturer in Visual Communications at Raffles Design Institute in Shanghai, China, Programme Director of Graphic Design at Deakin University in Melbourne, and Associate Professor at the University of Canberra (UC) where she was Programme Director for Design and the founder of the Cross-Cultural Design Lab. At UC she received six *Vice Chancellor's Awards* for teaching and research along with the *ACUADS National Distinguished Teaching Award*, with Carlos Montana.

**NOEMI SCHEURER** completed her studies at the Institute HyperWerk in 2018 and has since been working at the Stapferhaus in Lenzburg in museum education. She is interested in spaces and tools for dialogue; she enjoys seeking out and working on speculative and narrative projects, and she has a preference for the big topics. She still illustrates occasionally – especially when it is about getting a better understanding of the Other.

**FRANZISKA SCHÜPBACH** completed her degree at the Institute HyperWerk in 2018. During her studies she focused on illustrating and has since been working to establish herself as a self-employed illustrator. In order to make ends meet in the meantime she does part-time bar work and teaches snowboarding.

**OANTHATA JESTER SEALETSA** is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Industrial Design and Technology at the University of Botswana. He holds a Bachelor of Education in Design and Technology from the University of Exeter and a M.ed. in Technology Education from the University of Manchester. His research interests are in ergonomics and design, occupational health and safety, human-centred design and technology education. He has published extensively in international peer-reviewed journals and presented peer-reviewed conference papers in ergonomics and design. He has also been considerably involved in community service work, with a focus on remote-area dwellers in Botswana.

**KEIPHE NANI SETLHATHANYO** is currently reading for her Ph.D. in Design at Leeds University, and she is a lecturer in the Department of Industrial Design and Technology at the University of Botswana. She holds a Master of Arts in Product Design Innovation Management from Nottingham Trent University and a Bachelor of Design (Design and Technology Education) from the University of Botswana. Her specialisation and research interests are in the following fields: product development, cultural knowledge and

design, and integrating traditional knowledge into design. She has published numerous peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapter and presented several peer-reviewed conference papers.

**AMARDEEP SHERGILL** graduated from Australian National University in 2017 with a Master of Visual Art (Sculpture). She received two *EASS (Emerging Arts Support Scheme)* awards from the university. Since her graduation, Shergill has exhibited her work in a number of solo and group shows in Canberra. Her work is inspired by travel, cultural heritage, identity and transmigration.

**ÉRIC SIMON** is a multidisciplinary artist whose work revolves mainly around painting, drawing and writing. Simon's work has been shown in numerous solo and group exhibitions in Canada and abroad, and he has curated many exhibitions. He has published five books of fiction and poetry (*L'Amoureux cosmique*, Boréal; *La visite du cerveau*, L'Oie de Cravan; *Hamidou Diop*, Mécanique générale; *Sur les traces de l'avenir*, L'Oie de Cravan; *Les mille et une phrases*, Contre-mur). Simon is a Professor at Concordia University's Studio Arts Department and a founding member of Concordia's Drawing Lab Dessin. His work has been the subject of many publications and he has received numerous grants and awards.

**ANDRINA DARJA STAUFFER** is a process designer. She is eager to explore hybridity by merging design principles with visual narration to create novel concepts rich in context and value. She is fascinated by contemporary culture, multidisciplinary collaborations and the human dynamics between ourselves and the technology we use. She is a professional photographer and conceptual designer.

**ANNA STUDER** completed her degree in Process Design at the HyperWerk Institute in 2012. Afterwards, she worked as an editor while undertaking a Master's degree in cultural journalism. In her Master's thesis she looked at the potential for creatively re-working travel experiences. Today she works at the School of the Arts in Bern where she has responsibility for communications in the music department. She continues to take an active interest in intercultural topics.

**TATIANA TAVARES** is a lecturer in Communication Design at AUT University in Auckland, New Zealand. She is a practising artist and scholar who investigates the interface between decolonial storytelling and media language. Her artistic doctoral thesis (completed in 2019) is concerned with the potentials of polyvocality and interactive digital narrative. Her subjects involve practice-led research methodologies, Latin American syncretism in artistic and literary form, magical realism, and emergent technology. Her design practices are at the intersection of graphic design, creative writing, illustration, prop making, film, sound design, AR technology and animation. Tatiana is research associate for *Cultural Spaces and Design* in partnership with the Institute HyperWerk.

**JILLY TRAGANOU** is Professor of Architecture and Urbanism at Parsons School of Design. Her publications include *Designing the Olympics: Representation, Participation, Contestation* (Routledge 2016); *Travel, Space, Architecture*, coedited with Miodrag Mitrasinovic (Ashgate 2009), and *The Tokaido Road: Traveling and Representation in Edo and Meiji Japan* (RoutledgeCurzon 2004). She is currently working on an edited volume entitled *Design and Political Dissent: Spaces, Objects, Materiality*, to be published by Routledge in 2020. She is Co-Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Design and Culture* (Taylor and Francis).

**JESSICA KATE TWEED** completed her Bachelor of Design at the AUT, NZ in November 2017. After graduating she lived in New York City for a year where she undertook internships with *Facebook*, *The Lions Model Management*, and *SMAKK Studios*. Jessica now lives in London where she works as a freelance graphic designer, focusing on publication design, visual identity, and social media strategy.

**TOSCA AIMÉE WAEBER** is a cook and process designer. Since her sixteenth year she has been involved in vegan, vegetarian and high-end gourmet cooking. After years of learning and assisting with design both at home and abroad she switched to journalism for a year. In 2018 she completed her Bachelor's in Process and Postindustrial Design at the Institute HyperWerk in Basel. The focus of her work was on food concepts, experiments in a social context, and intercultural work in connection with photography and storytelling.

**CATHERINE WALTHARD** is a founding member of the Institute HyperWerk where she holds a professorship in the field of design practice. She has over 35 years of teaching and directing experience in art education in Switzerland and has presented lectures and workshops in Europe, Australia and New Zealand. Her professional activities extend to collaborations with theatres and art galleries. She also contributes as a jury member on art and university committees. Her interests lie in the supervision of students' projects within the context of cultural experience in design education.

**MANUEL WÜST** works on the design of processes and products which improve the lives of people living under difficult conditions. The starting point for his final year projects at the Institute HyperWerk in 2014 (Bachelor's) and at the Integrative Design Institute in 2017 (Master's) were the precarious situations of people living on a rubbish heap in the Philippines and in the conflict zones of South Sudan. For the past year, he has been developing products for and with disadvantaged people.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our work on this publication as well as on the research project of the same name *Cultural Spaces and Design. Prospects of Design Education* was promoted and also crucially shaped by many students, teaching colleagues and friends, universities, institutes, and institutions. From inspiring talks and from the intensive collaboration with them emerged new ideas, unorthodox deliberations, ground-breaking proposals, as well as financial and other forms of support. We are grateful to everyone who enriched our work and made it a process full of surprises and productive turbulences. Thank you all so much for this exciting time!

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More information about the research project *Cultural Spaces and Design. Prospects of  
Design Education* is available here:

<http://culturalspacesanddesign.net>

<http://culturalspacesanddesign.net/travelogue/>

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#### ABBREVIATIONS

**HGK FHNW** Academy of Art and Design, University of Applied Sciences and Arts  
Northwestern Switzerland, <https://www.fhnw.ch>

**HyperWerk** HGK FHNW HyperWerk (Institute for Postindustrial Design) was founded in  
1999. It is one of ten institutes at the Academy of Art and Design, Switzerland.

At HyperWerk design is understood as a processual strategy which shapes our living  
environment. [https://www.fhnw.ch/en/about-fhnw/schools/academy-of-art-and-design/  
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