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BUILDING ARCHITECTURAL PROVOCATIONS

JOHAN LIEKENS

Abstract

This paper ventures from a sharp distinction between modes of acting/reflecting/expressing in the field of art and architecture. Each mode confined to the inside of a specific practice, seeking its relevance there. Contrary to this, I argue that design-based research has to gain from an interweavement with outsides: outside modes and outside worlds. The argumentation is guided by designerly cases. On an evident level, I identify an interweavement of different modes of acting/reflecting/expressing as a fertile breeding ground for new insights that would otherwise remain veiled. On a fundamental level, I argue for the interweavement with another *outside*, i.e. the everyday world, if design-based research is to fulfil its full potential. I venture from Kwinter's call for a revision of the – architectural – object. I argue that if design-based research, working through artefacts, is to regain its political working, we as design-based researchers are to adopt a critical questioning design attitude, inducing dynamics of negotiation. In this, I then identify the deliberate interweavement of established consensual mechanisms such as affordances with dissensual mechanisms to be a promising strategy for architectural research. I conclude connecting to Rancière's notion of *dissensus* and his distinction between *political* and *policing* practices.

Keywords:
critical design, negotiation,
suspense/suspension, dissensus,
building, drawing, writing

Design-based research: a weaving process

“Es gibt Leute, die mit Linien, Schrift und Worten handwerklich gut umgehen, und es gibt Leute, die bauen ein Haus.” These words by the artist Gregor Schneider surfaces a quasi-unbridgeable distinction between two kinds of people, constructing at the same time in the same field – the field of art – each with their own mode of acting/reflecting/expressing. In his *Haus Ur*, Schneider works in a most radical way. The artist is entangled in an ongoing production of interior spaces within the existing interior of *Haus Ur*. There is only and always building, never drawing, never writing, never reading. Throughout his acting/reflecting/expressing, Schneider is radically directed towards what he considers to be the insides of his specific practice: the inside of that particular interior, the inside of his own memory, the inside of one singular process: that of building. “Linien, Schrift und Worten” then are rendered alien, belonging to an *outside*.

I want to hold up this quasi-unbridgeable distinction between different modes of acting/reflecting/expressing, arguably between two modes of intelligence¹ also, as a mirror to the conception-in-progress of what we understand to be design-based research, influencing also the design attitudes or roles towards the world we construct in parallel as design-based researchers.

1 I.e. *design intelligence versus discursive intelligence*.

Design-based research, seeking its form aside classical research and practice, might be drawn towards a sharp-cut distinction similar to Schneider's, and propose a counter-model based on actions/reflections/expressions attributed to the own kind of people. Design intelligence then put in opposition to discursive intelligence, the last attributed to the dominant text-based model. In several discussions I attended on what design-based research exactly is, the debate often was narrowed down to the nature and amount of text that could be endured aside the more authentic, inside actions/reflections/expressions of design-based research, or to if and how text should accompany the authentic core of artistic production that carried the design-based research. In both cases, text – *linien, schrift, worten* – then becomes something that is added, post-factum, as a surplus to an authentic core.

In my opinion, two threats emerge when adopting this oppositional perspective and singling out actions/reflections/expressions that belong to the inside of design-based research and subsequently define and subordinate those belonging to an *outside*.

A first evident threat is situated on a process level. In the act of singling out, one underrates the potentially fertile interplay that emerges from interweaving a difference of actions/reflections/expressions, sprouting from a multitude of incoming influences and communications. Here, I want to connect shortly to the etymology of text, derived from the Latin

texere, literally meaning to interweave. Hence text by its own nature is a process of interweaving whatever crosses its path, rather than that it is an added descriptive or reflective entity. Arguably, design, often described as a syncretic process, operates similarly. Hence designerly processes and text processes are not alien in their operating; both are construction processes of sense-making, reinforcing one another.

A second, more fundamental threat for design-based research is situated on a communication and relevance level. It is this threat that I want to address further in this contribution, and alongside which I want to develop a notion of the design-based researcher's – architectural – objects, and in parallel, of the attitude the design-based researcher then can assume in the world. This second threat emerges when design-based research in its conceptualisation, similar to Schneider's ever ongoing interiorisations, would emphasize mainly on what is its inside and seek its relevance in this movements inwards. An example of this would be design-based research considered merely as an improvement process of practice, communicated then back to practice. Simplified: ever better functional solutions, ever more aesthetical experiences, etc. This in contrast to a wider practical, ethical and political consideration of design-based research situating relevance not within the designed object as such, but in how the designed object intercedes and subsequently produces new knowledge within the socio-spatial challenges of the everyday. Hence, not the object as such prevails but that which it produces.

In my design-based research, situated in the field of Interior Architecture and its education, I also identify *bauen* as an important action/reflection/expression, as does Schneider within the confinement of his practice. However, in my research I intentionally orient the *bauen* process outwards and to outsides: the built architectural objects I adopt are meant to produce, influenced by and influencing outsides. At this point, I want to introduce Sanford Kwinter's call for a revision of the concept of the – architectural – object.

As design practice and thought are deflected away from the traditional and largely 'aesthetically' constituted object and simultaneously reoriented toward a dynamic macro- and microscopic field of interaction, an entirely new field of relations opens itself to the designer, theorist, or artist. (Kwinter, 2002)

Here, I believe, moving away from aesthetical and functional improvement and indulgence, the relevance of –architectural – objects to people and world and to their interrelationship is sought in processes of interaction and interweavement. The – architectural – object in itself then is rendered somewhat to the background, foregrounding that which it produces. Kwinter suggests this revision as one of the "pathways that would have as a role to restore to architecture specifically the active, and not merely reactive role it once had in shaping cultural and social

life” (Kwinter, 2002). Close to this, Rick Robinson states that “artefacts people interact with have enormous impact on how we think. Artefacts do not merely occupy a slot in that process, they fundamentally shape the dynamic itself” (Robinson, 1994). The – architectural – object then, rather than being self-sufficient, operates as a “productive, lens-like materialization, through which we experience and learn to know the world” (Liekens, 2013). This lens-like materialization works on a practical, an ethical and a political level. I’ll reconnect to this notion of – architectural – objects working politically at the end of this paper.

First I want to talk shortly about an artistic object propelled by an interweavement of actions/reflections/expressions of both authors involved. I mention this object, because it edifies itself seeking influences and seeking to influence, and to my understanding comes close to Kwinter’s revised object. Furthermore, a reason to mention this object is that one of the object’s authors makes suggestions for the role of the artist to the world, which affects conceptions of our role as design-based researchers. Then, I will talk about some moments of interweavement in two cases I co-authored and -produced within my research project. As mentioned before, I will then also connect back to the political working of the – architectural – artefact.

On the corner of Greenwich and Harrison, an architectural object grows

In *The Gotham Handbook*, documented through different expressions in the novel *Leviathan* and the art book *Double Game*, actions/reflections/expressions attributed to the writer and those attributed to the artist are interwoven into new expressions, new facts, new (real-)fictions. Sophie Calle herself suggests to a certain extent a weaving process, describing *The Gotham Handbook* as “one of many ways of mingling fact and fiction” (Calle, 1999). Calle appears as Maria in Paul Auster’s novel *Leviathan*, where some of her work produced in reality is attributed to the fictive character Maria. Calle, wanting to reverse the situation in a next project,² proposes Auster to become the author of her actions in reality. Instead of granting Calle’s wish, Auster formulates *Personal Instructions for S.C. On How to Improve Life in New York City*, a set of four instructions. To “improve life in New York City” clearly refers to working on the interrelationship between people and world. One of the four personal instructions is to cultivate a spot. Calle is invited to pick one spot in New York City and cultivate it through designerly interventions. He asks her to spend time in watching everything that happens to the spot, everything that is undertaken by people passing by or using the spot, to record this, in pictures and texts, and to define if anything is learned from the people or the place through the performed interventions. Calle chooses as her spot to cultivate a twin pair of phone booths located at the corner of Greenwich and Harrison Streets. On the existing design – two phone booths – she makes designerly alterations; the existing use (to phone) is amplified and somewhat disturbed through the provocation of other, sometimes

² What will become *The Gotham Handbook*.

unforeseen uses. She stocks the phone booths with fresh flowers, cigarettes, snacks and paper to write comments, enhances them with folding seats branched to the bases of the booths. She observes the contingent and intentional passengers and users, mingles and interacts with them. Personal, often conflicting accounts on and uses of the spot are given or performed by the passengers and users. Instead of answering anything, the designerly interventions raise questions. They question the limits of the privatisation of public space, they question the notion *public* in the notion of *public space*, they test the potentials of a spot, when cultivated, over and over. Hence they are not (just) affirmative design, but critical design.³ Connecting back to Kwinter, we could say they are not so much reactive design, but active design. These designerly interventions do not (just) reinforce the object – the designed phone booths, they rather are oriented towards a provocation and unfolding of events, extending normal functioning.

Conceptualizing then the role of the artist or by extension of the design-based researcher, Auster himself, in *Leviathan*, clearly identifies the radical being different of the objects Maria, hence Calle, produces.

Maria was an artist, but the work she did had nothing to do with creating objects commonly defined as art. Some people called her a photographer, others referred to her as a conceptualist, still others considered her a writer, but none of these descriptions was accurate, and in the end I don't think she can be pigeonholed in any way. (Auster, 2004)

Maria thus mixes actions/reflections/expressions: pictures, concepts, writing. And, more important, Maria revises in her practice the concept of the – artistic – object, creating objects that have nothing to do with what is commonly defined as art. Arguably, Maria's revision of the artistic object parallels Kwinter's revision of the – architectural – object mentioned earlier. The object then being defined "not by how it appears, but rather by practices: those it partakes of and those that take place within it" (Kwinter, 2002).

I argue that the central idea in the above is the capacity of objects to provoke negotiation processes on values through their material manifestation in the world, when encountered and experienced. I also argue that through these negotiation processes, new insights or knowledge might occur. This revision of the concept of the – architectural – object is constituent for the design-based researcher's design attitude or role within the socio-spatial challenges of the everyday. A design attitude we labelled in another paper to be "a critical questioning design attitude, inducing the dynamics of negotiation" (Liekens and Janssens, 2011). The phone booths and the designerly interventions made by Calle upon them trigger at the same time contrasting viewpoints, interpretations and uses. Hence, they operate on a political level; I will come back to that notion later. The – architectural – object thus mediates in sense-making processes in the world.

3 *Affirmative Design and Critical Design* are formulated as radically different design attitudes, by Anthony Dunne (*Hertzian Tales*, 2005).



Figure 1
Complicating Machine^{02'} inviting for
different uses, provoking wonder and
thought in its users.

PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLAGE: JOHAN LIEKENS

On a corner of Tolhuislaan, frictional encounters unfold

In my design-based research project, called *Architecture's Provoking Instrumentality*,⁴ *bauen* is an important mode of acting/reflecting/expressing. To build architectural artefacts on a one to one scale in the real world/the city, connected to real contexts and contents, to real people with real desires, is to create material carriers for the *encounter*. Deleuze refers to when he states that "Something in the world forces us to think", and that "this something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter" (Deleuze, 1994). Built artefacts have the capacity to embody and affect their users or passengers, raising thought. Through being experienced and interpreted in use, they can intercede in the ways the city is lived (facts/the existing) and open up new paths on how the city might be lived – possibilities. Architecture then is the interceder John Rajchman refers to when he claims that "we always need interceders to open up new paths or sketch new lines in our lives" (Rajchman, 2000).

In the educational context where I teach, i.e. the design-based research studio called *Complicating Machines*,⁵ part of the courses of Interior Architecture at the Sint-Lucas School of Architecture, this means that the distancing architectural model normally used for educational purposes is left and replaced by the one to one scaled (interior)architectural artefact. Each year these complicating machines are built. The students are not asked to be reactive, following a prescribed program. They are asked to leave the safe walls of the school, become active in the world/the city and look there for issues to which they can contribute as interior architects through their designs. In parallel, the research studio intends to make the students aware of the nature and potential of their design attitude or role as design-based researcher: i.e. a critical questioning

4 PhD undertaken in a collaboration between Chalmers School of Architecture, Gothenburg and KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture, Campus Sint-Lucas, Brussels/Ghent, Promoter: Prof. Dr. Fredrik Nilsson & Prof. Dr. Yves Schoonjans.

5 Formulated by John Rajchman (*The Deleuze Connections*, 2000) opposing these problematizing machines to the commonly known *Turing Machines*, which only solve problems in prescribed ways.

design attitude, inducing dynamics of negotiation. In a vivid, multicultural part of the city of Ghent, I attributed the students with a particular building on a corner of Tolhuislaan, to experiment, build and test their complicating machines. The spot has a history as a private space, but it has also been the background of a semi-public occupancy: e.g. a place of worship for a small community of immigrants. Already in an early stage, while building, it each time becomes a meaningful place, provoking curiosity, participation and discussion amongst neighbours and passers-by: a cultivated spot.

The *Complicating Machine* developed and built during the first episode of the research studio, CoMa₀₁, was titled *Ont-moetingsmeubel*.⁶ *Complicating Machine* CoMa₀₂ was titled *(Con)Fusion by Cooking*.⁷

- 6 CoMa₀₁ emerged in a collaboration between the author, K. Deckers (teaching staff, co-design, co-execution); E. Fievez, J. Lippens, S. Delecluyse (designers), assisted by all other students of the *Explicit research Studio*, third bacheloryear Interior Architecture 2009–2010.
- 7 CoMa₀₂ emerged in a collaboration between the author (teaching staff, co-design, co-execution), I. Delobelle, S. D'Hondt, M. Morel (designers), assisted by all other students of the *Explicit research Studio*, third bacheloryear Interior Architecture 2010–2011.

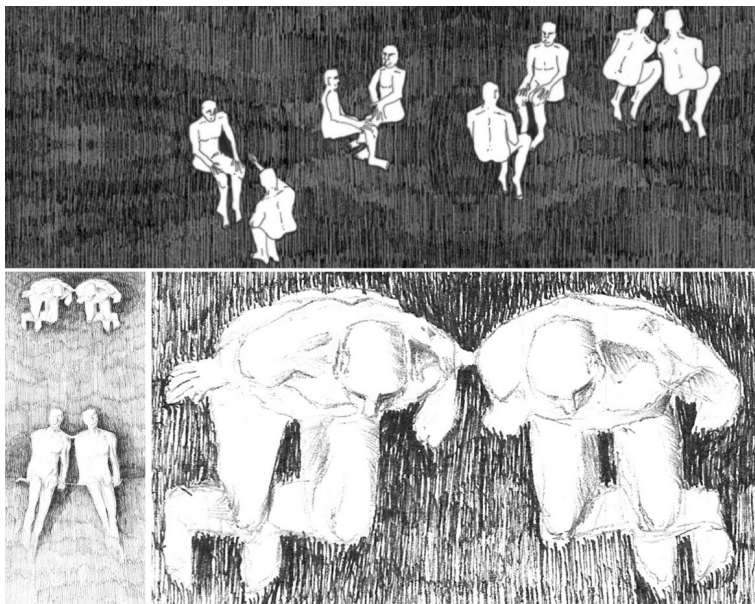


Figure 2
*Complicating Machine*₀₁. Through drawing the distributed and gathered bodies while omitting the architectural hardware, a certain sensation of *pathos* surfaced.

SKETCHES: JOHAN LIEKENS

The sensation pathos – first made sensible, then made operational

From CoMa₀₁, I would like to highlight just one moment within the process of its reception after being built; this because insights were gained by interweaving different modes of acting/reflecting/expressing, by interweaving the built with the written and the drawn. CoMa₀₁ was developed out of some students' interpretation of the Dutch word *Ontmoeten*, which they thought to be essential for their practice and research as interior architects, and also essential to the neighbourhood they were working in. *Ontmoeten* means "to meet one-another", but *Ont-Moeten* refers to a *not to be obliged anymore*. Hence, in short, the *Ont-moetingsmeubel* mediates between the everyday and unquestioned issue of people meeting one another and how this is instrumentalized by designers on one side, and the hidden, implicit compelling and oppressive nature

of this instrumentalized meeting, as a result of the will and authorship of the designer on the other side. It mediates between formal instrumentalized space and informal free space, as the carriers of our everyday meeting. It mediates between being goody-goody furniture and frictional furniture. In the architectural artefact, a difference of positions is granted to the bodies occupying it. All of these positions slightly deviate from normal ergonomics. A bench has inclinations, people steadily slide towards each other; sitting at a table, normal distances are shortened, the knees of the one opposed are uncannily felt; a wall with mirroring shutters leaves the decision for communication or narcissism to the two users manipulating them. Hence, functionality is disrupted, questions are raised and interpretations given. The user is forced to think.

Not able to clearly grasp and communicate the specificity of the poetic yet disturbing sensation that distinguished the *Ont-moetingsmeubel* during its functioning as a public interior, I started to draw the positions the bodies adopted while using the installation – drawing, not as a way of illustrating, but as a way of recapturing. Omitting the representation of the architectural hardware, the constellations of positions of sheer bodies foregrounded, without bias. In my sensation, some kind of mute tension haunted these drawings. Making and studying these drawings connected this idea of a mute tension to a memory from Aldo Rossi's *Autobiografia Scientifica*. Venturing from a car accident and the sensation of every bone in his body being broken, Rossi ends up by describing the sensation he had looking at paintings of the Deposition/Christ from the cross. He then describes the Deposition to be only partially anthropomorphic in these representations. Partially, the Deposition is about the sheer mechanical possibilities of the body. Hence, an estrangement from the normal image and sensation of the body occurs within the experience, within the encounter. Rossi identifies that sensation as the emergence of a *pathos*, generated through the abnormal positions taken up by the body. The distortion from normal functionality, from normal ergonomics and the subsequent distortion of the normal positions, constellations and sensations of bodies in the *Ont-moetingsmeubel* to my comprehension have a similar working and generate a similar *pathos*.

Deleuze identifies the starting point of thinking as a grasping “in a number of affective tones: wonder, love, hatred, suffering. In whichever tone, its primary tone is that it can only be sensed” (Deleuze, 1994). *Pathos* as a specific affective tone can be such a starting point. *Pathos* developed as an operational strategy to be used by the designer or the design-based researcher in his/ her artefacts then seems an interesting path for experiment. In this sense, *pathos* was (also) adopted as a strategy in the second complicating machine, *CoMa₀₂*.

A revised architectural object: Materialized political activity

I now want to give an account of how to my research *bauen*, in an outside-oriented interpretation, is quintessential in foregrounding architecture's potential of being a political activity – this through the case of *CoMa₀₂*. I want to demonstrate how the revised architectural object when built can trigger a materialized political activity within the lived encounter.



Figure 3
Complicating Machine₀₂. Upper part
gathering its users around the table in
unusual pairings.

PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLAGE: JOHAN LIEKENS

I will start from a simplified description of *CoMa₀₂*. *CoMa₀₂*'s basic idea rose from combining observations made by students: the neighbourhood where we would build is coloured by food and food culture(s); these cultures appear separated, i.e. in shabby eateries peeled from rituals or more ritually behind the walls of private interiors. Observations were also made of the presence of a natural partaking in public life and of a sprawl of institutionalized initiatives in the city to fuse cultures by means of cooking. In these initiatives, every friction is avoided, leading to harmonious cooking with minority groups under the sterile neon light of community houses. Contrary to this, *CoMa₀₂* welcomes friction at the table as a constituent factor in producing knowledge. I'll come back to that.

CoMa₀₂ comprises two floors. The lower floor consists of several cooking places, which are not private yet claimable. The doors of the house in which *CoMa₀₂* is built, are removed, disclosing the interior to public space. Over the cooking places of *CoMa₀₂*, a giant sculptural cooker hood is constructed which continues seamless into a community table in the upper part. Through the cooker hood, the sensation of fused or splitted odours and fumes reaches the people sitting at this table. A sensation comes to mind: "An ethnic group might use communal cooking along the

street as a refrain recreating home by means of culinary expressions, the gustatory sense of specific spices and olfactory markings” (Bush, 2010).

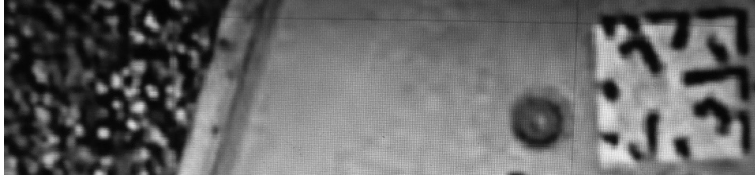


Figure 4
Aerial view of Wexler Studio's Community Table, part of the work *Two Too Large Tables*, 2006.

PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN FROM WWW.GOOGLEMAPS.COM

CoMa₀₂'s material manifestation resembles Wexler Studio's *Community Table*. Both tables seem too large. Ergonomic rules are disrupted, hampering normal conversation across the table. I connect here to Goddard's interpretation of Wexler's table being too large in the sense that the tables offer "too much possibilities for interaction and non-interaction, and it is impossible to reconcile so many possibilities, except that they all take place at the same flat [...] expanse of the table" (Goddard, 2001). Both tables gather and distribute their users in what Wexler calls unusual pairings. One can partake of a physical and mental community; one can turn away from it or form a parallel community; one may have no choice whatsoever when some positions are already strategically taken. The table also affords three culturally connoted postures, from-cross legged to Western, underpinning the formation of communities. In these communities, one may agree on sharing food. But from unwanted directions food juices might run through the scooped out gutters that link the scooped out plates in the surface of the table. Arguably, a parallel sensation of the *pathos* we saw emerge in complicating machine *CoMa₀₁* runs through *CoMa₀₂*. In use, the body is gently forced in – unforeseen – experiences that deviate slightly from the known. The mechanism at work is constructing a time in which multiple possibilities (both A and non-A) are afforded and brought in sensible negotiation within the same flat expanse of the table. If we were to make a script of the mechanisms and possibilities of *CoMa₀₂*, we would end up using the conjunction *and*: gathering and dispersing; sharing and bordering; using and confusing; straight forwarded functioning and estranging dis-functioning, being user-friendly and being frictional. Whatever *CoMa₀₂* leads to is negotiated through use in the immediacy of the lived encounter. I'll leave the actualization of whatever could happen at the table to the imagination of the reader, but certainly nothing is certain. I believe that at the table of *CoMa₀₂*, a time unfolds which I coined in another publication to be "an architectural time of suspension" (Liekens, 2013): a time of a passionate negotiation between possibilities as well as a time of postponement of direct and unbiased crystallization into one fixed track establishing meaning or fact. In that publication, I investigated the relationship between materially triggered negotiation processes and the construction of knowledge; the construction of new insights. I identified the established and consensual mechanism of affordances as

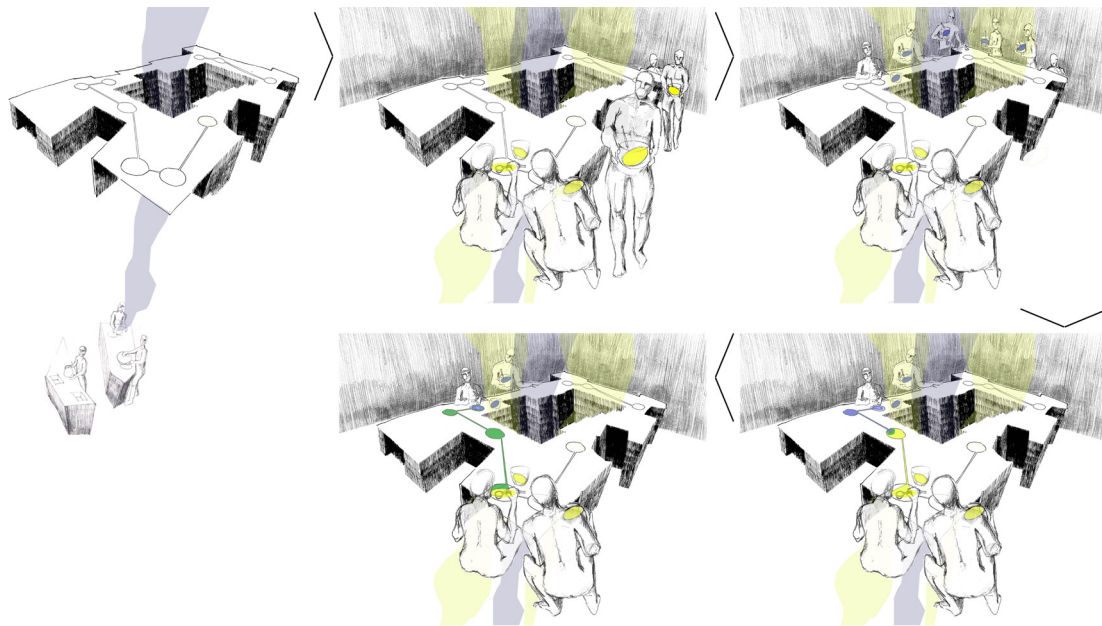


Figure 5
Complicating Machine₀₂, Setting the table, with users, odours and juices flowing from (un)wanted directions.

SKETCHES: JOHAN LIEKENS

an important mechanism in this production of knowledge through the use of and experience with artefacts. Artefacts *afford* actions, uses, interpretations. A table affords sitting around it, a table affords a structured conversation, etc. As Maier, Fadel and Battisto claim, affordances co-construct knowledge, they even construct an alternative knowledge base, more specific a “knowledge base on the success and failure of designs”, replacing “the tradition of transferring [...] knowledge through oral history” (Maier, Fadel and Battisto, 2009). It is the personal interaction and experience with artefacts compared to an archive or history of interactions and experiences that brings new knowledge into being. Although their interpretation of affordances is strongly directed to improvement, as it is often the case, they seem to leave a small opening for an interpretation beyond functional or aesthetic improvement:

The impetus for any design project can be understood in terms of creating and changing affordances – neither creating artefacts to do certain things, as a functional view of design would hold, nor creating artefacts solely on the basis of creating a beautiful form, but rather to create artefacts that can be used and that have meaning. (Maier, Fadel and Battisto, 2009)

Contrary to the tendency in design and architecture to interpret affordances as a consensual mechanism of improvement, contrary to the tendency to “develop products that will not confuse or disappoint”, thus “missing the essential connection between the power of objects to affect the way in which the world is seen and the mechanism through which that happens” (Robinson, 1994), I argue that design and architecture have much to gain from an infection of the consensual mechanism of affordances with certain dissensual mechanisms (such as estrangement, *pathos*, etc.). Let us thus develop products that will (also) confuse

and disappoint. The knowledge base constituted through a history of interactions then is used deliberately not for consensual improvement, but for triggering dissensual negotiation. We need the knowledge base that is established, but we need it for a goal beyond improvement, we need it for the production of new knowledge within the socio-spatial challenges of the everyday. We need it in order to deliberately unfold negotiation processes between possibilities, i.e. negotiation processes on values, enabling us to leave the track of our designs being translations of values given in advance.

Admitting, even designing friction, contingency, confusion, etc. into the established mechanism of affordances, all normally considered uninvited guests at the table, suspend the rules governing normal experience in CoMa₀₂. The agreement and experience that tables are made to certain fixed standards, to serve known phenomena such as eating, having normal conversation and hence distribute their users according to these standards without residue, are suspended. At the table, forms of belonging – communities – are not left unquestioned and are threatened by claims of other possibilities – deviant forms of belonging. As mentioned, the table is too large in its possibilities. These possibilities, rather than being irreconcilable as in Goddard's interpretation, first are dissensual, making different worlds present in one. Hence, adopting as a design-based researcher "a critical questioning design attitude, inducing the dynamics of negotiation" then could mean to deliberately devise artefacts that interweave known and established mechanisms such as affordances with dissensual mechanisms, and then inscribe these artefacts in the reality of the city, awaiting their architectural time of suspension to unfold, awaiting their production.

Here, we converge with Rancière's idea of the *political*. Venturing from the notion *dissensus*, Rancière makes a distinction between socio-cultural activities such as architecture being *policing* or *political*.

Police interventions in public space consist primarily not in interpellating demonstrators, but in breaking up demonstrations. It consists, before all else, in recalling the obviousness of what there is, or rather of what there is not, and its slogan is: 'Move Along! There is nothing to see here! The police is that which says that here, on this street, there's nothing to see and so nothing to do but move along. It asserts that the space for circulating is nothing but the space for circulation. Politics, by contrast, consist in transforming this space of 'moving-along', of circulation, into a space for the appearance of the subject, it consists in re-figuring space, that is in what is to be done, to be seen and to be named in it. It is the instituting of a dispute over the distribution of the sensible. (Rancière, 2010)

As *policing activities*, architecture and design affirm the normal state of things; as *political activities*, architecture and design problematize the state of things and afford new knowledge to come into being.

Conclusion

As Gregor Schneider does for his specific practice, I identify *bauen* as a fundamental mode of acting/reflecting/expressing for (my) design-based research. However, I argue that within the realm of design-based research, one should not limit oneself to delineate a set of unique modes, e.g. *bauen*, in a defensive effort to establish what is the inside to *our kind of research*. It is exactly by interweaving different modes of acting/reflecting/expressing that new knowledge can be produced and communicated outside the confinement of a practice. *Bauen* then becomes alternatingly thread and filler within the interweavement processes.

Beyond this quite evident declaration, I argued that the relevance of *bauen* as a mode of acting/reflecting/expressing is not the built artefact as such, its aesthetics and functioning, as this is often the case in the confinement of a practice, but that the relevance resides in what the built artefact produces through its being encountered, experienced and interpreted. I lingered on notions of the revised architectural object and argued for an infection of established consensual mechanisms operating in design, such as the mechanism of affordances, with dissensual mechanisms, in order to bring about new knowledge on the interrelationship between people and world. The architectural object, thus considered, then becomes truly a political artefact. In parallel, I developed a notion of the design attitude or role of the design-based researcher towards the world and its socio-spatial challenges: a critical questioning design attitude, inducing the dynamics of negotiation.

To conclude, I follow Also Rossi in his *Autobiografia Scientifica*, touching upon the role he thinks architects have to assume, and this is the role to set the table – “apparechiare la tavola” (Rossi, 1984). As designers as well as design-based researchers using the mode of *bauen*, we must move beyond the mere production of architectural artefacts as translations of and answers to what we already know, reinforcing the state of affairs. Instead, we must carefully prepare our architectural artefacts, edify them in the world, set their questioning mechanisms and await in suspense whatever will come into being.

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