

## PhD by Design: Mapping Conceptual Groundings – Reflecting Methodological Approaches – Modulating PhD-Curricula

### Project Leaders

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### External Partners

ERASMUS+ / Aiba  
Chalmers Technical University  
KU Leuven  
Bergen School of Architecture

### Type and Planned Duration

FFF-Förderprojekt, January 2018 until July 2020

### Field of Research

Architectural Design Theory

### Publications & Conferences

#### Conference

*Online closing Conference "Mapping, Reflecting and Developing PhD by Design", 17th September 2020.*

#### Peer-reviewed journal papers:

Hanne Van Reusel, Christoph Michels, Yves Schoonjans (accepted, forthcoming). *Dissecting the Archipelago: PhD by Design Concepts in the Fields of Architecture and Urban Design. ARENA Journal of Architectural Research.*

Charlotte Erckrath, Cecilie Andersson, Vera Kaps (under review). *Perspectives on Curricular Culture in PhD by Design: A case study analysis on the Aarhus School of Architecture. ARENA Journal of Architectural Research.*

Malgorzata A. Zboinska, Fredrik Nilsson (under review). *Architectural Research in Hybrid Mode: Combining Research by Design with Artistic and Science-inspired Methods of Inquiry. ARENA Journal of Architectural Research.*

Krystyna Pietrzyk, Fredrik Nilsson (under review). *Wicked problems in architectural research - the role of research by design. ARENA Journal of Architectural Research.*

Jonathan Hill (under review). *Design Research: The Next 500 Years. ARENA Journal of Architectural Research.*

Gro Rødne, Leif Martin Hokstad (under review). *Making is Thinking: From design fixation to provocative competence. Perspectives on transformative learning within architecture and other creative disciplines. ARENA Journal of Architectural Research.*

### Abstract

The ERASMUS+ project contributed to an understanding of design-based PhD programs in the disciplines of architecture and urban design. The four partners - KU Leuven, Bergen School of Architecture, Chalmers University of Technology and the University of Liechtenstein - reviewed the conceptual underpinnings, methodological tools and curricular that have emerged in the context of PhD by Design in the past decades. The findings of the project were presented and discussed at the project's online closing conference Sept. 17th 2020. The project's findings have been submitted for publication in form of a special collection with the Journal AJAR: Arena Journal of Architectural Research.

As part of the Bologna process and the European Commission's "Higher Education Modernization Agenda" schools of architecture and urban design are facing the challenge of developing educational programs on all three levels of higher education (BA, MA, PhD). While Bachelor- and Master-Degree-Programs have successfully been established in the past decades, the implementation and promotion of PhD-programs has been a thorny issue for most schools of architecture and urban design. Since architecture is traditionally rather a practical than an academic discipline it lacks a (common) understanding of the meaning and practices of academic research. Many European schools have come up with curricula which adopt methodologies, examination formats and evaluation schemes from disciplines with strong research traditions in the natural or social sciences.

Therefore, existing PhD-programs tend to address research questions located rather at the periphery of the design disciplines, addressing problems of e.g. architectural history, urban sociology, building physics or building technologies. However, research problems that are located at the "core" of architecture and design practice remain largely unaddressed. During the past decade various European design and art schools have begun to develop design-based education on PhD-level. The goal of this research project consists in mapping these approaches in order to interrelate, position and develop further the various streams of doing research by design. In so doing the project contributes to a reflexive, creative and collaborative positioning and implementation of new and existing PhD programs.

The project's output aims to provide an insight into the conceptual underpinnings, methodological tools and modules of curricular that can be assembled and adapted to the resources, cultural specificities and institutional histories of design schools across Europe.

### Keywords

Research by Design, PhD, ERASMUS+, Architecture, Urban Design

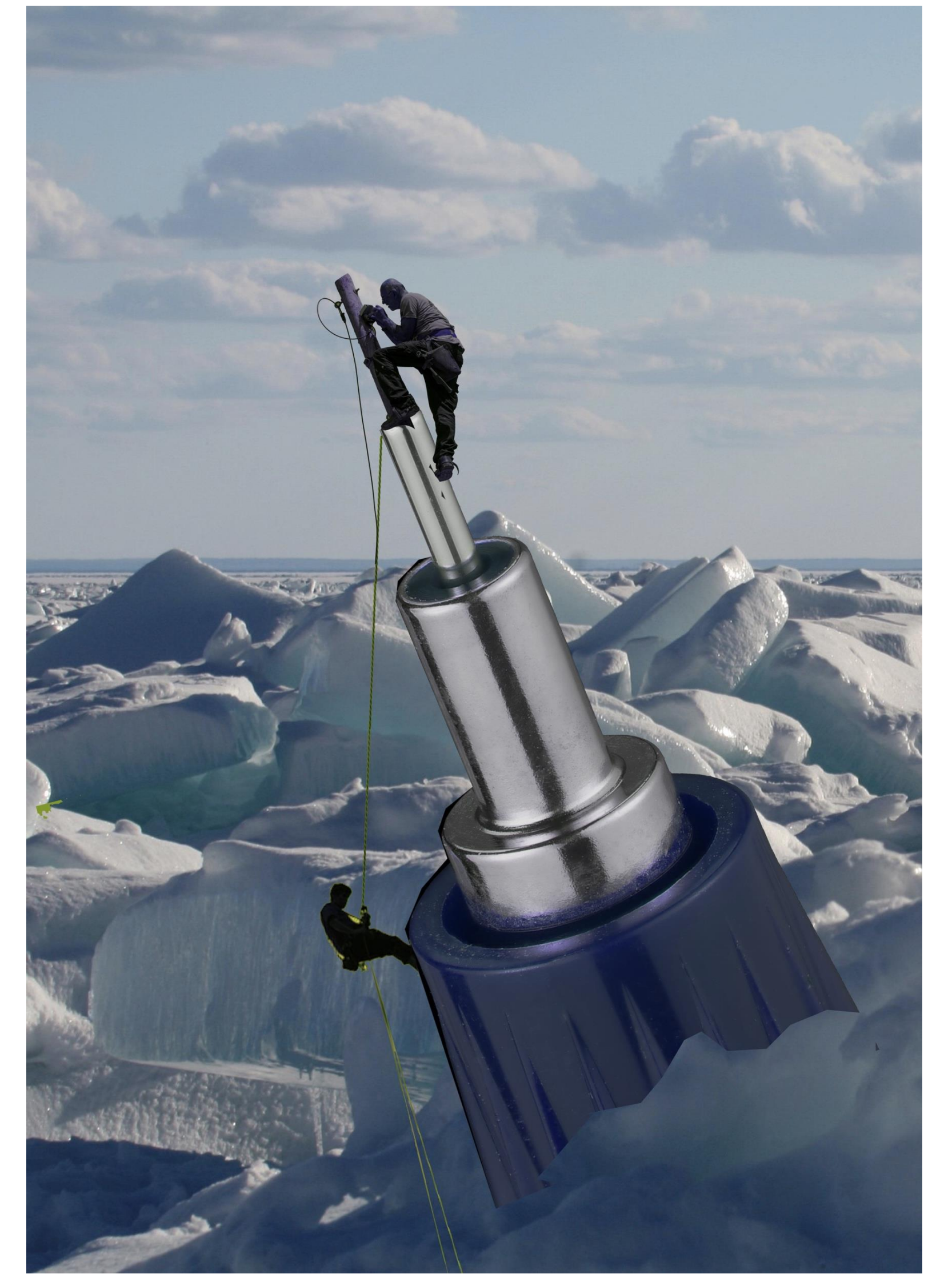


fig. 2  
Researching design methodologies, conceptual collage by Christoph Michels



fig. 1  
Project meeting at Chalmers Technical University, Nov. 2019