THE ARCHITECT, THE EXPERT & THE LOCAL

From engaging with the local-expert to engaging as the local-architect

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Keywords. *Observe, Engage, Act, Mediate, Initiate, Enable, Empower*

From STARCHITECTURE to ENGAGING AS / WITH MULTIPLE AGENTS

Context

The disciplines of architecture, design and urbanism are currently in transformation. In 2000 architecture and urbanism was considered as space designed by a single author. The architect and her / his specific expertise as designer was considered to be the key figure to allow for qualitative space. The publication of *Superdutch* (Bart Lootsma, 2000) is only one example that reveals a series of projects that were developed through the approach, praising the role of the architect, or rather the 'Starchitect'.

   Since several years the disciplines of architecture and urbanism are shifting towards a multidisciplinary approach and co-authorship. Beyond engaging with experts from other disciplines local communities are increasingly involved to generate change from within the social, spatial and economic context. In *Spatial Agencies* (Nishat Awan, Tatjana Schneider, Jeremy Thill, 2011) practitioners reveal how they expand the profession from designing space to engaging with / as multiple agents to develop projects collectively. In *Future Practices* (Rory Hyde, 2012) several projects overcome the difference between the local and the expert, engaging with recognizing the local as the expert and stating that everyone is an expert.

Proposition

In the expanded field of architecture and urbanism, could the process of engaging allow to reveal the local as resource, considering him/her as expert to co-design urban transformation? By engaging not only *with* the local-expert but *as* local-expert, can the architect overcome his position as the architect-expert one among other local experts that co-produce socio-spatial change from within the existing context? How can the architect step out of the process, being deeply embedded in the project as a local-expert?

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Alive Architecture: Parckdesign 2014 - Parckfarm

The paper & presentation is a reflection upon the ongoing case study Parckdesign 2014 of my practice Alive Architecture that I am currently co-curating. I will present

the case study and articulate how I moved from engaging with multiple agents through monthly neighborhood meetings to engaging as multiple agents, become a local-architect. In the first phase I revealed and empowered local expertises that were then contributing to the production of the project. One example is the bread oven, initiated and realized by Abdel, a local actor in the neighbourhood. In a later phase I

To generate a self-sustainable project beyond the duration and the site of the festival together with some local experts I set up the not-for-profit-organization 'Parckfarm Tour & Taxis'. The farmers are running and maintaining the Parckfarm, topic of the Parckdesign 2014. In case of success of the project the process may be expanded beyond the duration and the site of the festival, becoming the self-sustainable PARCKFARMTour & Taxis.

Patrick Bouchain: Boulogne sur mer
To contextualize the approach I will compare the project to the case study of 'Boulogne sur mer' that Patrick Bouchain developed between April 2012 and April 2014 in France. The crucial aspect of the project is that the young collaborator of the office 'Construire', Sophie Ricard, moved to the neighborhood that was to be developed by the office. Engaging not only as the architect but as a local actor allowed the young architect to overcome the difference between the architect-expert and the local-expert, to finally co-produce socio-spatial change together with the local agents. The project is considered as finished and Sophie Ricard lately moved back to her home town.

Positioning the work
Both projects have in common that the architect embeds him/herself in the social and spatial context of the project. This allows the architect-expert to act as the local-architect-local to engage with other local-experts to co-produce the project. What is different are the means of engaging and the role of the architect in the outcome of the project. While in the project Boulogne the local-experts are enabled to participate into the design and construction process, in the project of the Parckfarm I intend to empower local-experts to allow for a process beyond my own involvement.

ENGAGING AS THE LOCAL-EXPERT

What is specific in both cases is that engaging not only as architect-expert but as local-architect is becoming crucial on one side to reveal local needs, on the other side to empower people to develop their own environments. While engaging allows to reveal expertise's and ambitions of local actors, it equally empowers people to engage into the process of producing or transforming public space.