

Practices In Research

practice-based research journal for architecture

Beyond the Mandate

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Practices in Research #04 - Beyond the Mandate - December 2023

online open access double-blind peer-reviewed journal for practice-based research in architecture.

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In Practice
interuniversity research group
of practising architects



In Practice explores the multiple ways in which architects can engage their professional practice in academic research and reciprocally.

In Practice seeks to open a space for architecture practices in research through the development of methodologies, conferences and publications.

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Beyond the Mandate

“In Practice” is an interuniversity research group of practising architects engaging their practice(s) at the heart of their research. In Practice explores the multiple ways in which architects can engage their professional architecture practice in academic research and reciprocally. “Practices in Research” (PiR) is an open access online journal for practice-based research in architecture and related disciplines, based on a selection of contributions to a conference. PiR explores the ways in which these practices engage or relate to research.

For PiR, the practice cannot be reduced to an illustration of a theory. Inversely, the research reaches beyond the simple observation of a practice. PiR aims at research in which the practice is essential as a subject, as a modality or as a perspective and combinations thereof, it aims at contributions in which research and practice mean mutual enrichment. These contributions remain closely related to the practice, but they are not limited to its presentation or documentation. They ambition to take a step beyond the reality of the practice in the way they present, explore, reveal a question or reflection in the field of architecture.

PiR also invites contributors to explore creative forms of communication, questioning the usual hierarchy between text and image. For PiR, visual and written narrations relate to each other in multiple ways. Images are more than

illustrations, and text is more than an explanation. Hence, the template provided to the authors should be considered as a toolbox or set of rules, to be used creatively.

This journal contains selected and double-blind peer reviewed articles by authors who contributed to the Practices in Research conference that was held at CIVA and the Faculty of Architecture La Cambre Horta at ULB in Brussels, on March 7th 2023.

Beyond the Mandate: a call for contributions

For all projects, architects receive a mandate, be it explicit or implicit. There are expectations and results to be obtained: programs to fulfil, budgets and timelines to keep, regulations and norms to obey or to negotiate, authorizations to obtain and construction sites to monitor. But these mandates also come with freedom, the possibility to address individual or collective ambitions, pleasure, sensibility, or responsibility. Additionally, designing architecture is a public matter. It entails engagements and societal duties that reach beyond the immediate interest of a commissioner. Moreover, practicing architecture is a cultural performance, involving a larger public than the individual commissioner. Maybe this margin, this freedom of proposals, but also this societal duty, is at the same time what lies beyond the mandate, and what enables the mandate.

What do architects do for free, which is not explicitly required? What drives them beyond the expectations inherent to their mandate? What is the motivation of their work? Which are the implicit or explicit duties? What are the dispositions and inclinations in their designing? What are the reflections and inspirations that feed their design practice? This space beyond the mandate, the freedom or the unexpectedness in responding to expectations, is what moves any reflective or inquisitive practice. It is where the relevance of a practice unfolds, addressing the discipline itself, society, culture, theory, and pedagogy. It is where a claim, an assertion or an observation can be made. In a word, what makes a practice worth sharing with an audience resides beyond the mandate.

Similarly, research related to practice always covers a space that goes beyond this practice. Independently of the multiple models of research by, for, or in practice, research is never a simple account or description of undertaken actions. Research creates and explores a margin around the reality of the practice. While focusing on specific topics, it embeds the practice in a broader field. Is research relating to a practice then also about its motivations? Is it then exactly about understanding what goes beyond the mandate?

Beyond the Mandate: a conference and a journal

Based on this open call for abstracts, contributors in line with the ambition of the call were invited to present their work and reflection in a conference organised on March 7th 2023, in Brussels. It consisted of a series of short presentations followed by a moderated debate with the public, the participants and invited panel members.

Based on the contributions to the conference, the editorial committee developed the fourth issue of the Practices in Research Journal.

Firstly, the editors invited the authors of a visually compelling presentation at the conference to provide a visual essay (no peer review). In their contribution titled *Fast and Slow Practice*, Felix Schiettecatte, Lennart Vandewaetere, Marius Vaneeckhoutte, lecturers at KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture and partners of the architecture office Wissel, reveal series of models and sketches along pictures of realizations, emphasizing the multimodal nature of a reflexive practice.

Secondly, the editors invited selected authors to submit a full article to a double-blind peer reviewing process by two members of the scientific committee or invited experts.

Anonymity¹ was strictly maintained and all information in the paper that identifies the author was removed. The anonymity of the reviews was also ensured. The reviews investigate the scientific rigor, the artistic quality, and the clarity of communication of the contribution. The review also involved an open comment on the contribution.

Following this editorial and review process, five additional contributions out of ten received abstracts were approved for publication. They form the main body of this issue of the journal.

In *NO CLUE – CLUES, working with the morelli method*, Oliver Burch, Jakob Junghanss, Lukas Ryffel (8000.agency, ETH Zürich) evoke how the observation of seemingly irrelevant details (the Morelli method) informed the emergence of a practice resulting in the organization of alternative competition and reflection environments in order to question ongoing processes of urban transformation.

In *Uncertain Soils in Experimentation - architects and scientists representing the plural values of soils*, Pierre Bouilhol (ANMA, ULB, Université Paris 8) and Agrippa Leenhardt (ANMA), explain how the architectural, landscape and urban practice at ANMA started to develop a genuine interest for soil, that is impacted by almost every projects but is rarely taken into account as a productive tool in the design process allowing for a better symbiosis of projects with their environment.

1 The editorial board acknowledges that the work of the involved practices may benefit from public recognition in the professional or cultural field through prizes, exhibitions, lectures, etc. The anonymity of the contribution does not address the practice itself but the authors of the contribution.

In *MAKING THINGS, Practising co-creation in the marginal territories of central Apennine*, Maddalena Ferretti and Benedetta Di Leo (Università Politecnica delle Marche) explore how two practice-based research projects were set up in collaboration with local authorities in the Marche Region Central Apennine in Italy to foster local tourism and development.

In *Ruination design - Experimental preservation and archaeology of the contemporary past, based on art exhibition design in a modernist-post-socialist context*, Tomasz Świetlik and Michał Kulesza, two independent architects, present an experimental approach to dealing with modern ruins and the preservation of the contemporary past, focusing on an exhibition design project for the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw in 2018, authored by Tomasz Świetlik studio and to which Michał Kulesza collaborated.

In *BIG BRICK HYBRIDS, Learning by building beyond the mandate*, Lieven Nijs (BLAF architecten, UGent, RWTH Aachen), evokes the research of the architecture office BLAF on a new construction paradigm related to the production of load-bearing façade bricks. Based on the apparent paradox between façade cladding and load-bearing construction, Lieven Nijs explores BLAF's related and underlying design strategies.

In a last section, the editors invited active panel members of the conference to write an overarching article, based on the conference and on the contributions described above.

In *Beyond the Mandate of the Architect, Or How Inquisitive Practitioners Redefine it*, Johan De Walsche (UAntwerpen), Christine Fontaine (ZED architects, UCLouvain) and Wouter Van Acker (ULB) investigate with precision how the contributors to the conference addressed the topic the “Mandate”. This closing article was also peer-reviewed following the same peer-reviewing process as the other contributions.

We would like to thank the authors of the journal, the contributors to the conference and the members of the Scientific Committee for their committed participation. Both conference and journal are forming a dynamic platform of exchange for a network of practicing architects who are either academic or professional researchers, and who share a genuine interest for the critical investigation of the discipline and the positive curiosity for its diversity.

The editors

Benoît Vandenbulcke, Harold Fallon and Benoît Burquel



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