

Graz University of Technology

NOVEMBER TALKS 2011

Boštjan Vuga | Xiaodu Liu | Ángela Paredes | David Adjaye

PREFACE

The party is over! All our guests have gone home, time to think back and to draw a short resume. Four great guests from Slovenia, Spain, China and Great Britain followed my invitation to come to Graz, to present their work and individually be drawn into an in depth discussion.

They were asked to lecture not more than 45 minutes and then a team member from my institute and me had a talk of again 45 minutes with each of the invited lecturers. This format, the November talks 2011, was highlighted by Bostjan Vuga from Ljubljana, Angela Paredes from Madrid, Xiaodu Liu from Shenzhen and by David Adjaye from London.

The visitors were able to witness positions in contemporary architecture in a first row atmosphere. Bostjan Vuga, Angela Paredes, Xiaodu Liu and David Adjaye communicated their individual positions in an intriguing and to certain extent in a very personal way.

These very special moments in architecture were captured by us and transcribed in order to be the

central contents of this small brochure on hand. Hopefully we were able to communicate the wonderful atmosphere of every evening.

May I take this opportunity to thank the members of my institute, the Institute of Architecture Technology, for organizing this event and may I especially thank my team members Erika Petric, Ferdinand Oswald, Marisol Vidal and Uta Gelbke who supported me substantially in the talks.

The November talks 2011 would not have been possible without the substantial financial support by the Sto Stiftung as well the generous trust I was granted by the representatives of this foundation. Thank you very much!

Please enjoy this brochure, the positions, the remarks and comments being made. Try to get a feeling of the atmosphere we were able to experience and if this event has drawn your interest then you may already mark the November talks 2012 in your agenda!

Roger Riewe

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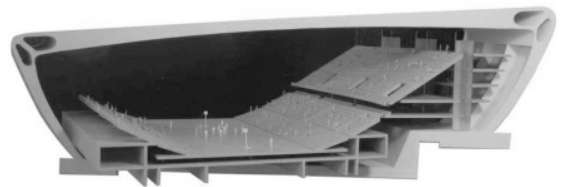
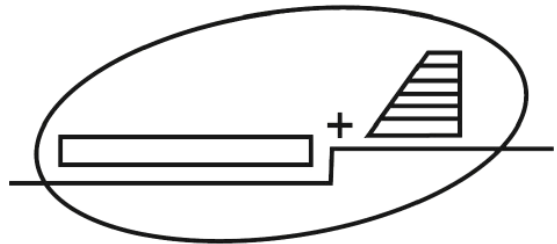


BOSTJAN VUGA

NOVEMBER 7, 2011

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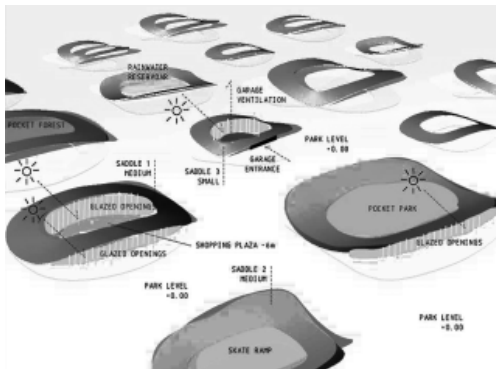
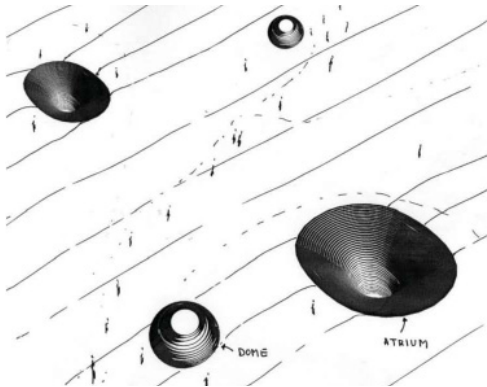
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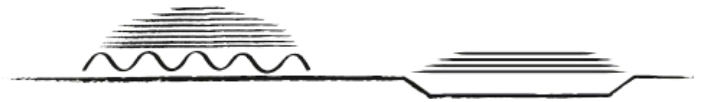
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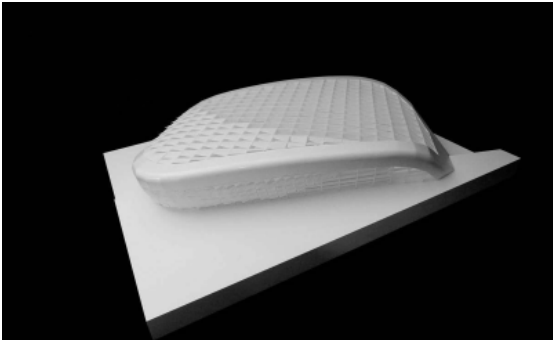
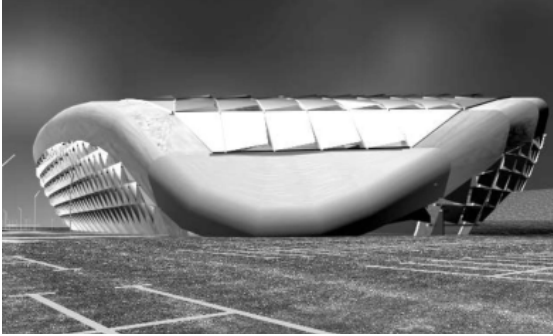


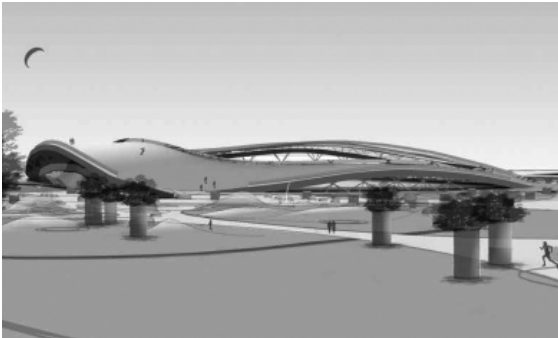
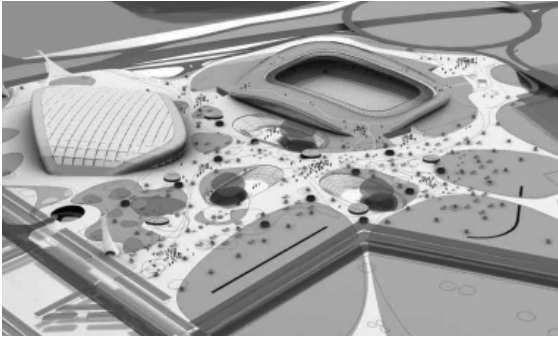
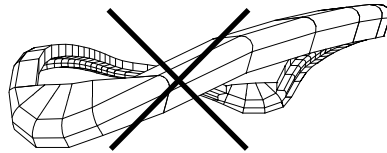
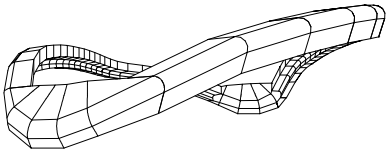
2007

<The project itself is a vehicle, a control device for us to see where we are, how flexible or rigid we are in terms of communicating with the client and our own ideas... how consequent we are in developing a project, in changing it, but at the same time keeping close to our initial thoughts.>



2009





<There are 3 different projects for one single project in the end, a hybrid for the sports park in Stozice, containing a football stadium, a multipurpose sports hall, a big retail shopping center and a public park on the roof.>



INTERVIEW



BV_Boštjan Vuga

RR_Roger Riewe

EP_Erika Petric

RR_Boštjan, thanks a lot for this really interesting run through this long and enduring project [Sports Park Stozice]. It's interesting that you as an architect are always asked to continue and I think there will be many years left. We would like to continue this session now. May I ask you to please take your seat in the middle and we would like to continue the discussion. This is a kind of new format with a lecture of 45 minutes followed by a discussion, also of 45 minutes. So we still have many questions to ask and I will be joined by Erika Petric this evening, who has also been preparing this session with Boštjan. We will try to ask questions also to go into more depths of this project you showed and of the work you are producing as well as the your way of working.

EP_I would also like to welcome Boštjan again. It's nice to see a former student colleague after 25 years ... and also I would like to thank you for this astonishing journey [through the project shown in the lecture], we made with you, which gained speed, which kind of made me also almost stressed, I don't know about you [speaking to audience], but this was a very nice example, a kind of situation we really see in our life as architects: our life is measured by projects, not by time. So this is one project and ten years of your life, right? [Boštjan laughs] ... I mean usually, we have two or three years or four maybe, this here is an unexpected or bit exaggerated situation, but nevertheless thank you for that! I think this was also very interesting for our students and ... as I said, it gained momentum, so as I have observed,

this is also something we get into as architects. So when we go back to the beginning, and it is interesting that you have chosen this project, because it's somehow also the beginning of your office too, and this beginning happened in a very specific situation - maybe you can talk about this a bit – in a specific political and economical situation in your country. So let's talk about these first ten years of "hibernation". What happened in these ten years in your office, in your work, what experience and progress did you gain?

BV_ Hm ... I mean ... Erika, I am very happy, that after all these years we came together ... I was very happy when we met again, which was a month ago, in Ljubljana, the two of us, colleagues from the school ... Yeah, what happened in these 10 years? As I had put it in the introduction, we were lucky to start the office at the right time.

EP_ Can you describe the situation then, what was the right time? ...

BV_ ... I mean, what was the right time ... So it's ... I'm going to describe it in a kind of pure physical form: I mean, in 1996, when we started the office, Slovenia was five years old, you know ... and this means that entropy in the society was really high. And this means also, that two young guys, without having any references, could have actually got an interesting competition. And we won that competition

for the Chamber [of Commerce] and for the extension of the National Gallery ... in the peak of the transition period. So, if I sort of simplify it a bit ... everyone wanted to have something new, or different, or even radical or ... I mean the tendency to be challenged was much higher than later on. And then, what happened then? You know, what happened is that Slovenia, as a kind of young and small country, in my opinion fell very quickly to a sort of comfort level, where everything was really comfortable. So when everything is comfortable then you don't need to do much, because you feel good. And, as the project I presented also shows, from the beginning of 2000 or late 90's to 2006, especially in the city of Ljubljana nothing has really happened. I mean, there were like renovations, you know, like small things going on, but these big projects, which in a way influence or provide an urban impact to the city, they were all in the drawers. And with the appearance of the new mayor – actually the government has changed, and also one of our ex professors became deputy mayor - this contributed a lot to the change in the city. So, the way how we worked was always connected to – shall I use this word? – irritation. We irritated ... both the clients and the colleagues, by doing things which were at first not defined to be "good" things. Because, these were not only residential housing projects or fountains on the square, these were like things which were not supposed to be there in the first place, but then they created a sort of ... yeah, a little bit of a discomfort and then, you need to - put-

ting it back to physical terms - put your own kilojoules of energy into it to get used to that and this is what we called, coming back to your question, this is what we called Formula New Ljubljana. So what is that? In my opinion, in a frame of a middle-sized European city, like Graz as well, and [talking to R.R.] you also know that, you need people. You need ... I mean, you cannot explain that this would be like Lagos for example, where critical mass would actually start generating renewal, you need people who are, ... maybe this sounds a little bit naive, but ... people who are smart and visionary enough and who have the will and tendency and desire to change the city.

RR_ Was this actually also due to your slightly different training being an architect, because you and your partner started off studying in Ljubljana and after your studies, as I've mentioned before you went off to the AA in London, coming back later, set up the office with you partner Jurij Sadar, who had stayed in Ljubljana, being a university assistant, then started practicing architecture and finally to work with you ...

BV_ Yes ...

RR_ ... is it also actually the "view from the outside", kind of being more precise about the situation of the local, that made you work like this?

BV_ I think so. I think so. I mean ... having menti-

oned the AA, I was like two years there under a sort of strong pressure of Jeff Kipnis. Who, you know, was a kind of bad guy in architecture ... but we were all in the seminar injected by the idea of the New. How to generate the New? How to develop new design techniques? How to actually communicate in architecture in a different way? So ... for sure, those two years I've spend in London had a special influence on my thinking and my viewing of architecture.

RR_ Let's also talk a little bit more about this what you've just mentioned before, Formula New Ljubljana. I think this is something we should really focus on a little bit because I've the notion here that there is something coming up like new forms of architecture, new communication in architecture plus the political position as well. Was this so important for you actually to get started with your work, to kind of find ... to get the grip for your partnership?

BV_ You know, Formula New Ljubljana was a kind of post product ... a post phrase. We started, ... or ... let's take this as a fact: we are a practice which designed 90% or let's say 80% of the projects in Slovenia and 80% of those projects in Ljubljana. So in a way, the city itself became a sort of case study for us and ... and then, ... maybe it's kind of conscious/subconscious ... you know, that, when you design in one city, and when you are commissioned to do two apartment buildings in a distance of 300 meters, then the question will be whether

you approach it in the similar or same way, or you completely change the architectural concept. This is one thing, and second it's also our response to how we viewed Ljubljana. Ljubljana was actually – if you think – I'm kind of simplifying, but in the 20th century actually developed by two hands: by Plecnik on one side and by Ravnikar on the other side. And this demagogical approach of similarities and homogeneity, you know, we really wanted to change that. So instead of, ... like if you walk in the center of Ljubljana – with my greatest respect – but it's kind of ... too much of a single hand. And what we tried to do with this Formula, like our concept, 17 concepts that we developed, architectural concepts which then are placed in the city, this idea shows how it is possible to enable multiplicity in the actual ... sort of small territory. That it doesn't become homogeneous when it becomes dynamic and enables and allows this sort of dynamic picture.

RR And was this new formula ... or Formula New Ljubljana something like a manifesto you were writing?

BV It was at the end, yeah. It was a book, a publication, and an exhibition, and it was ... I would be afraid of calling it a manifesto, but it was our proposal for the city. How the city should actually develop. How the city should be inclusive, not exclusive. How the city should actually tend towards new things, not towards a kind of frozen condition. I mean it was ...

I would say it was a lot about ... I wouldn't even say political, but ethical relationship. Why would someone at the beginning of the 21st century have the right to freeze one part of the city, ... to say "this is under „Denkmalschutz“, this is unchangeable", and you can only do something outside of this frame or territory.

EP But I have to say, when I saw your slide about the New Formula Ljubljana, it actually strongly reminded me of Plecnik, [Boštjan laughs] because this is somehow ... I mean ... we've studied in a time when Plecnik was a kind of "God rediscovered", so I think we all rebelled in a way, but this is something I see as a model of Plecnik doing his work in Ljubljana, on different spots. So how do you ... how do you cope with this ever returning relation to Plecnik as a



local architect? What are your procedures or your steps against it?

BV_ You know, there is a main difference, it's really a big difference, you know. I mean we, or I believe, that today it's almost impossible to create ... not only to develop - a new city according to a single great idea or a single great master plan. Which for sure Plecnik's idea was, you know, to do everything single-handed, super genius, a super talented man. And then, he would actually build step by step, change the image of the city into something which would be recognized as his oeuvre. I mean, what we are much more interested in, is developing actually single architectural objects in the city, which would have a stronger urban impact. So it means, that basically, instead of developing one gesture, it's just the opposite, it's kind of creating nodes in the city which would then start to generate a different network. No, not network, but a different layer. And this layer is – as I said before – inclusive not exclusive, as let's say Plecnik was. Because, his work is ... he fulfills all the things, ... what we do, we leave certain things open in order to accelerate ... or even enable further development, further change.

EP_ But then you are obviously approaching every site differently ...

BV_ Yeah ... yeah ...

EP_ Which results in a kind of – you can say ... maybe this is criticism ... in a lack of style or lack of language. How do you deal with it ... what is your opinion on this?

BV_ Very good question, you know. It's something which was also a dilemma for us, for many ... I mean, for a certain period of time. It's ... basically we really try to avoid to be prescribed to a certain style, which would in a way, of course, mean sort of branding the office, if I use this proliferated word in a more simple way. But there is something else: we believe, that when one experiences our building or our projects, there's a similar way of experiencing it. Something, you know, how you develop space, how you develop perception, how you develop a movement in the space - this is what actually brings many of our projects together. ... I'm just going to give a simple example: we design many buildings where we have a super low entrance, you know, really low entrance, and then when you get into this low space, then the space inside opens up. But it's the way of almost ... projecting or even designing the final effects, the final architectural effects of the building, and then thinking about what kind of effect or influence would that have on a perceiver, a user, the people who would actually get in touch with the building.

RR_ I think that is a very interesting aspect especially in contemporary architecture, the nodes of playing

contemporary architecture, which are I would say something like resisting a signature ...

BV_ Yeah...

RR_ And this is on the one hand difficult, problematic, because you're not branding in a certain way, you cannot be recognized immediately, on the other hand you still have to sell yourself, get jobs, you know, get some work and get into business. So, what I would like to know about this is, when you start off your design or your project, which are the essentials, which is actually and finally the bottom line in a project? Because there is something like that, I think, in many of your projects, where you can see clear this is „Sadar+Vuga“. But it's very hard to find out, this is something which fascinates me...perhaps a politician, the mayor, would get very nervous if he asked you to do something, he would never know what he will be getting. [Bostjan laughs] How do you go about this?

BV_ It's almost like, you know, that now I would kind of ... open a book [laughs], of how to do things. Basically ... we don't have an instruction manual or a cookbook, you know. With this Formula ... with this concept we developed ... we tried to develop let's say our own DNA, which in a way enables us to design, sometimes better, sometimes worse. But when we design, at the end it's not only the client or the mayor who is surprised, but it's also us who

are surprised in the end. I mean it may sound that we are kind of ... that we are not consistent and that we loose control, but basically we are really into the process, so we actually define what the final effects should be and then the technique how to get to that. So what is actually the thing, which brings the building together ... it's maybe like the best example presented here [referring to presentation], It's appearance in the space. So, for instance, ... I just want to give an example ... like the Chamber of Commerce, the Salamander residential house, the Arcadian, the Mercator shopping mall, they are all like horizontal blocks in front of a square. So in that way we shrink the building and make it much more compact and leave the open surface in front in order to get a different experience. Or next thing could be the change from horizontal to vertical like a sort of quick shift ... for example, when you stand in front of the Chamber you really experience it as horizontal, but once you are inside it becomes vertical. So, you could call it just a cinematic effect or something which really connects to the experience, to the way how you, your body, your vision or your sense would experience the building. And to us this is really important, you know ... Every project needs to be a reassessment of something else, of something which was not before.

RR_ Are there actually any ... or specific „must-haves“ in your design work and „no-gos“?

BV_ This is a good question. I think that what we try not to do is a composition as a sort of visual principle, so that you would develop a facade as a composition of elements, which would look good. I mean ... the development of the project and also the external appearance is many times... almost like in 90% would be the result of the internal organization.

EP_ So, do you consider also the process of moving in this relationship between public and private space - the orchestrating of the process of moving, like in the Chamber of Commerce - a principle of designing? Do you use this often in your work?

BV_ Ja, ja! I think this is really something which, one would say, brings the project together. For instance, you know, like the one we really ... where movement was defined as the main concept of the building was the Arcadia, the black building, which has a very simple program - lighting showroom - but then, we developed this as a sequence of nine ... actually as a concept of nine sequences. We even tried to think, how the ratio, or a sequence can be provided with architecture elements. ... I'm just going to give you a very simple example: you move to the building, you have three ramps which are stacked on top of each other, ... you move from the very low space into the lighting room in the showroom, up to the roof - really simple – but then with the steepness of the ramp – and we are really happy that this was not qualified as a public building, because in that case it would

never be ... it could never be approved, you know, with the ramp of that steepness - in a dark space, ... you would influence the way how fast people will actually move up and how fast they actually go down. So, I am convinced that there are very basic or, I would even say, rudimentary architecture elements, with which you can influence the way how you experience the space, how you experience the building and how you actually, in the end, get the building into your memory.

EP_ So again ... what is the importance of public space in relation to your buildings or the sites you build on?

BV_ What is important for us in terms of a public space is how monumental form or monumental development, which is somehow prominent, could become a stimulus for informal use. So these are two things which more or less don't come together. For instance, the fountain we designed, it is a monument - it's the fountain for the town anniversary - but then, the way how it is done, how the connection to the water is, with these two shells joined together ... made of green stone ... it has become sort of haptic, you know, and in a way stimulates informal use. Which means that kids would come there and start using this as a playground, the fountain which is basically a monumental object, usually meant to be perceived only. So, answering the question about the public space, I think we don't want to determine

or to over define or over design, but kind of give a stimulus for the use. And this stimulus again, it can be very basic, you know. I mean ... if you take ... I don't know ... the Piazza in Siena, with this four percent slope ... it completely changes the way how it is used.

RR_ We actually noticed that when you talk about these things you have a very good knowledge of the local, of the quality of the local, which you then try to interpret in your design work. I think this was also the advantage you had when you were working on this Formula New Ljubljana, kind of creating your own realm in which you then could actually put in your own work again ...

BV_ Yeah ...

RR_ ... something, I think, highly interesting actually, of really getting to go, to get moving. And now, I think, the phase is coming for your office - you've got a really high international reputation already - of I think moving outside the country with projects. The first design projects were competitions you've been doing, I think in China and in Japan, in Serbia, and so on. How would you actually then try to transport these this method of working to these countries? If it's Germany, maybe Switzerland ... it's not any more the local, would it be something like the „glocal“ already?

BV_ Yeah ... I think I'm quite convinced, that the way how ... I'm going to give this example: basically if we were to design like one building in Lisbon with a similar program ... in Lisbon and in Riga for instance ... they would for sure take local similarity or local specifics, but, at the end, the way how would you - if I use this word again - experience the building, well here in a way they will be similar. So ... moving abroad - if I use this word - I don't find as a big challenge, it's not that we would need to drastically change something, because our approach, if I go down ... really back ... or down to the basics, it can be very similar. I mean, you would experience a cantilever ... if you do a cantilever, then the cantilever could be experienced similar in the north and in the south, you know. But then the life under the cantilever would be different. I'm back to that what is a stimulus in the environment. For instance, if you take the Piazza in Siena, as I mentioned before, and Snohetta's opera in Oslo, there is a similar inclination but the atmosphere and the feeling is of course very different. There you have very similar architectural devices providing different experience.

RR_ How much information would you actually need, or how much specific information would you need to run a project outside Slovenia then?

BV_ We are really still quite crazy in doing research, you know. We spend time and material expenses in order to really get as constrained as possible. So I

would say that working abroad would for us mean that we just keep a very similar way of doing, but develop of course a different stimulus, which doesn't come from the neighborhood in Ljubljana but from somewhere else. But you know, after 15 years of office ... what is the difference? Before, you start the project with a sort of visual references or let's call it like image bank from an external world. And now, we're much more using our own production, our own projects as ... I wouldn't say as a reference but as a stimulus. So as if you would start where you stopped in some other case, and you try to change it. So it's ... I don't know ... if you would ask me what would be my idea where we are moving, where we are in three, four or five years, I would not ... I cannot give you a very clear answer now.

RR Actually when working as an architect in Slovenia it's like being a member of an architectural family somehow ... In a way, I think, comparable with the Dutch scene like 20 years or about 25 years ago ... also with the same constraints I assume. Because in Holland, it was the case that when being part of this family, you would have to obey the rules of the family. So all those architects who are now more known or well known in Holland actually made a detour abroad and then came back, but they were never able actually to grow inside Holland. This was absolutely a „No-Go“. Is this kind of a similar situation than in Slovenia? Is it hitting you as well?



BV I think that, maybe due to a different political situation there are many young offices, of my generation or younger, who actually got back to Slovenia and then started building, realizing projects. But what has become evident, and I think that we are really trying to push it forward, that now you can have five, six, or ten offices working in Slovenia, or in Ljubljana, with a different approach – a different conceptual approach, a different approach to development - which was not possible before, at least not according to my knowledge. This sort of pluralism in my opinion shows how the country has actually opened up.

EP When teaching, do you want to make use of the experience you have made in 15 years with all these explorations and this research you have done? So,

maybe to touch this subject - since this term you are a visiting professor in Berlin. What is new that you are bringing into the program there?

BV_ In Berlin?

EP_ Yes.

BV_ The name of the seminar is „placeholder“. I asked the students to develop twelve different projects, there are actually twelve different groups, developing different projects on twelve future construction sites in Berlin. They actually have to develop a pavilion, which would be a sort of forecaster of the future project. But a pavilion, a building, as a social space or public space. A temporary building as a public space. This is more like a methodology, and what is maybe interesting, you know, that you have a health's retail, office, residential, all these different programs and then you need to extract that and develop a pavilion, a placeholder which should present the health in the future, or the office in the future. So it's something, which in a way links back to Formula New Ljubljana - there are still singular projects in the city, developed by different people and what is different is actually that they are temporary. And Berlin is actually the right place for that, the right city for that, where you see how actually the temporality can become permanent and so on. So let's see ... When I taught before at Berlage or in Barcelona, it was much more connected to one

site, to master plan on one site etc ... And now, in Berlin ... this is a two years program ... I was really interested in questioning temporality and permanence, temporality as a kind of vehicle for change of the city. And at the same time, I'm really happy that the program is actually called „architectural design innovation program“ – which means that one needs to be innovative in designing. So at the end, you know, I still think, you know, that if you are not a good designer...if you cannot design [laughs]... then it's rather difficult.

RR_ I think we now have set a very interesting frame, you know, talking about the projects, the way you do your design work, going across to opening up to Europe, coming now to the topics of education, which I think is a big span of the realm you are working in. Teaching in Berlin I think is something very specific, because, as you already said, this is the city where you've got this notion of the temporalities in between utilization of space. It's incredible; it's so specific for Berlin. Is this actually something also which is part of the students life they bring into the studio? Do they grasp this as well already?

BV_ Hm ... we just started, you know. I mean the studio started like a month ago, but I'm in a way in an ambivalent position, because there are so many students coming from abroad, from Asia and South America, all over Europe, and of 30 students, there are 15 German and 15 from other countries. So this

temporality also influences the way how the studio actually works. I mean you need to really distinguish between those who came to Berlin to party [laughs] - a very good temporal condition - and those who actually study. And for the time being ... I'm still not sure how to do that.

EP_ The question is what part you are?

BV_ Yeah [laughs] so first party then design ... or first design and then party ...

RR_ Actually we have always been ... no, well [talking to audience] you have been seeing slides all the time in the background, a loop that has also been prepared with Sadar+Vuga projects, and now I think we should also hint at and talk about, a book presenting the work of Sadar+Vuga which has been published and will be in the bookshops soon. A book by Andreas and Ilka Ruby and with people interviewing your work, as Simon Hartmann, Mark Lee, Jörg Leeser, Jacob van Rijs and Philip Ursprung. I can imagine this is highly interesting – we couldn't of course do all the reading before this evening [Boštjan laughs]. I actually spoke to Andreas Ruby yesterday and he didn't yet have the book and he was also very curious. The focus on the conceptual level in your work is very high in the book. Do you claim this is important to be communicated and I would like to ask you in how far you want this book actually to be perceived. Is it a kind of selling the

work of Sadar+Vuga or is it working more on the basics of the bottom line of your work?

BV_ This is actually ... I think the 4th book of the office, and it's a review, it's kind of section or cut through the 15 years of the office production. But what I think is more interesting is that this is a book, which is ... I mean you know Andreas and you know Ilka, and you know how you actually collaborate with them ... It's a book about collaboration. And I think this is the most important parameter or fact I would actually put forward. So it's a book about the collaboration between the architects and the editors with the help of all the writers, who actually came to Ljubljana, experienced the buildings, sorted buildings and then made comments. This is really interesting, and this was Andreas's idea, that instead of writing essays, they would invite five, six people you mentioned, to spend two days in the city and then we had sort of school review. So I was there first to present the project, and then they discussed about our work. Of course, not saying just nice things, you know. [laughs] And we agreed upon that all this will be published in the book. It was edited and prepared as text, but the transcript will actually be published in the book instead of essays. This, in a way, also shows a kind of openness - inviting someone to say also bad things about you. I mean, bad ... you will see when you read this text, all this "that shouldn't be done in that way"... I mean the way architects like to communicate. [laughs] "I wouldn't

have done that", you know ...

RR_ But they're friends? Aren't they?

BV_ Yeah, but ... [laughs] Philip was very ... you know him [laughs]. But the book itself was a big experience for us as well. For instance there are these three parts. The first part is a so called catalogue, where we choose 18 projects, Jurij and I then wrote the text, which is narrated with reflection of the projects from today's point of view. It's presented in a way of what could have be done, if we would design this today. Then the second part is the review as transcription that I mentioned, and the third part is something I really enjoy - it's a sequence. Since our projects are so different it's kind of sequential route through 60 or 65 images, photos, which actually prepares you or gives you a hint of what the experience of our building should be. So that's it.

EP_ So maybe to close this round ... in 2009 you won the Golden Pencil of Association of architects for the best project built in 2009 and this year you won the Platinum Pencil, which is kind of for the life work ... so what do you intend to do now?

BV_ I can deteriorate and go into pension [laughs] and move out ...

RR_ So I think this was a really essential closing word, Boštjan. [laughs] And if there are no ad hoc questions from the audience, I would like to say

thank you for coming, thank you for giving this talk, thank you for the discussion here and I think we can appreciate a lot having this kind of preview of your book which will be in the bookshops probably in one month time. Thank you also to the Sto Stiftung for making this venue possible this evening and the three evenings to come, thank you very much. [speaking to audience] And thank you for spending this evening here with us. See you next week.

publication discussed in the interview:
SADAR + VUGA: A Review
Edited by Ilka and Andreas Ruby
Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2011



XIAODU LIU

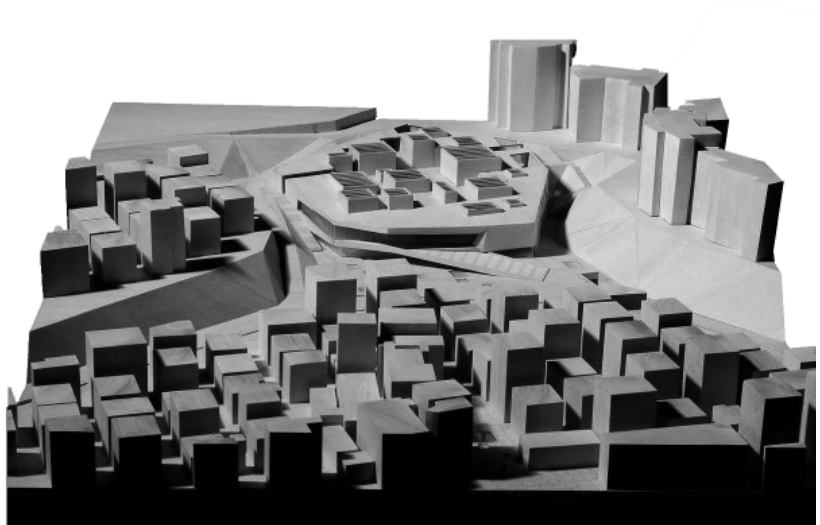
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LECTURE_31

INTERVIEW_39

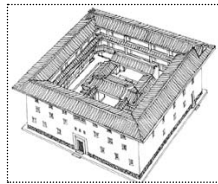
<...situated in a big urban village.

We dissolved a huge mass, using a similar mass of small boxes on the top of the roof... and used the urban village footprint, which we projected on the facade.>

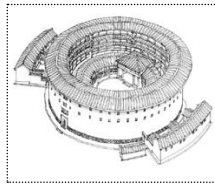


LECTURE
DAFEN ART MUSEUM_2008

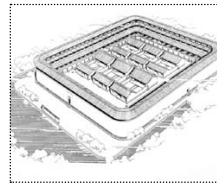




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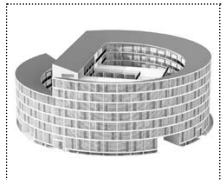
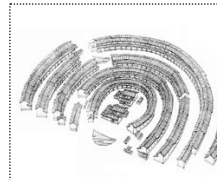
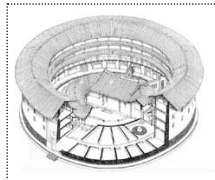
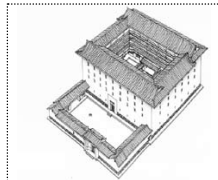
CIRCLE 圓



CITY 城



TULOU 土樓公舍



TULOU_THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING_2008

<Learning from the tulou: one can help preserve community spirit among low-income families.

Our experiments explored ways to stitch the tulou within the existing urban fabric of the city-green areas, overpasses, expressways, and residual land left over by urbanization. >

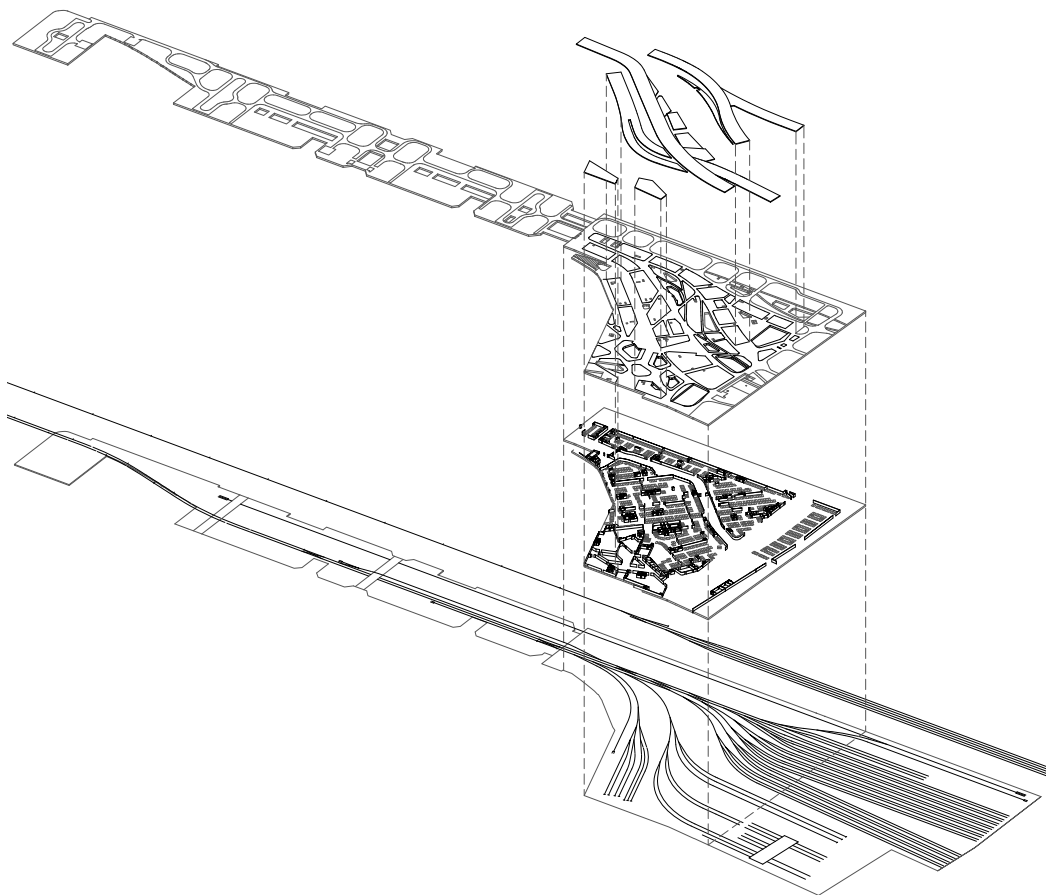


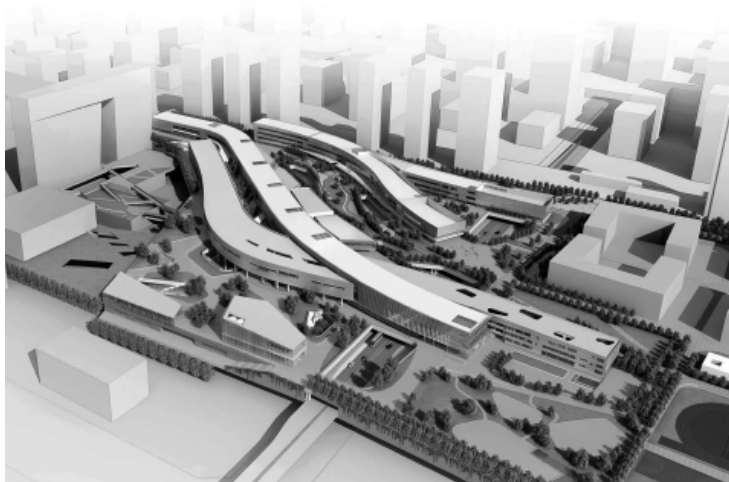
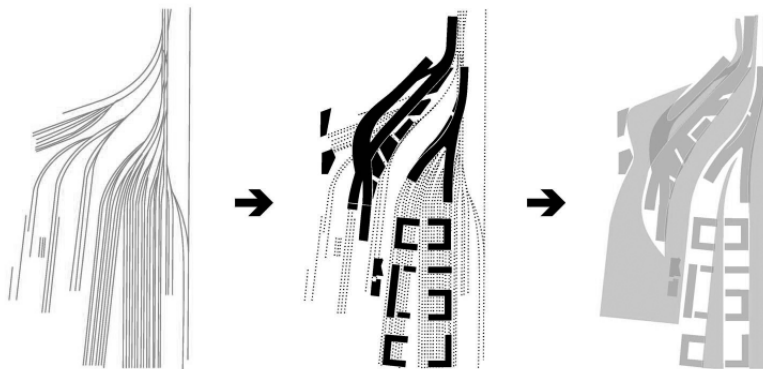
<...we looked back to the ideal of Chinese living in the past and started to do some experimental work on some parks.
As inspiration we took the shape of the mountains and the different spatial courtyards, linking them together.>



MID-HILL APARTMENTS AND HOTEL_2007 RETURN OF THE IDEA OF CHINESE LIVING





SHENZHEN BAY METRO PLAZA_IN PROGRESS

INTERVIEW



XL Xiaodu Liu

RR Roger Riewe

FO Ferdinand Oswald

FO First of all, I would like to welcome you. Many years ago you have been a teacher at the Department of Architecture at Tsinghua University in Beijing. Just after you graduated, you started teaching. At that time, you were only 24 years old, which is very young for a university teacher.

XL If you are familiar with Chinese modern history, we have experienced an over ten years lasting cultural revolution. This revolution actually destroyed most of the cultural things. All universities stopped teaching for 10 years. We didn't have graduates for over 10 years. So there was a huge gap of teachers at Tsinghua University. We didn't have new teachers. I was in the second class of graduates since the universities got their former education back. The

department desperately tried to grab some students, who were qualified for teaching. I decided to be a teacher and I was only 24 years old. I started teaching students and it was a really good experience. Actually, I know my two partners from school, I taught them. That was the time, when we got to know each other. It was a different time. The first couple of years were really bad, but I learned fast how students react. And in the third and fourth year the students started to give me good feedback.

RR You started at Tsinghua University to make your bachelor in architecture. What was your motivation to go to the States, to continue your studies there, do your master in architecture in Miami?

XL_ As I became a teacher at Tsinghua University they promised to get me the master degree. The deal was to send me overseas because of the higher education level there. But they didn't do it because they sent out all young teachers from the previous classes and they didn't come back. So they said: „Sorry, we can't continue sending teachers overseas, because you won't come back.“ So I stayed at the department for six years till 1989. You know the events in 1989 at Tiananmen square. There was a big political shift and we thought: „Oh my God, the old times are coming back!“. We were afraid of ‚red terror‘ starting again and China is going to close the doors. This was the time I decided to go overseas. Actually, I was lucky, because the time was quite right to study abroad and there my idea of architecture totally changed.

RR_ But then you came back to Beijing and to Shenzhen. Was it difficult to reintegrate in a social and political way or was it easier because you had experienced western architecture?

XL_ For a lot of freshly graduated Chinese people, who go overseas, it's really hard when they get back, because they can't adapt to society anymore. Everything is different. You see a lot of bad things happen, it is chaotic and a lot of places are not nice. They couldn't adjust themselves to the new environment. But for me, I didn't want to stay in a foreign country forever. I had always in my mind that

someday I'll come back. In the year 1998 I had the opportunity to come back, because both of my partners grew up in Beijing. Obviously Beijing was the centre of architecture, it didn't make any sense not going back to Beijing. But when I went back nothing happened. There was no construction site and no job. From 1993 to 1998 there was a big recession in China. Shenzhen was the first city that recovered. I got there at the right time to have a job. As first job, they wanted me to do a small park which comes with urban design. Actually, at that time, nobody knew how to do urban design. So I said: „I know how to do urban design“. I got the job [laughing]. I didn't really know much about urban design, but I knew some principles better than others. So this is how I got to design a small park. And after I did this park, a second job and a third came in. Shenzhen is a city that welcomes new ideas, people are very open-minded. It's a really good place for beginners, when you start your own office. Especially with our experiences from Miami, where we stayed 9 years, it was a good time to start an office in Shenzhen.

RR_ When you set up your office in 1999 with your two partners, you created a name for this office. It was not „xyz“ or „big“ or „small“ or all this fancy names, it was URBANUS. And somehow this name URBANUS is also a programmatic approach of your work, I believe. The way you read the city, the point of view you take when you start designing projects or a design process. As I think the general view of

the city but also the specific environment which is part of your work as well. Now, when you're working in this city of Shenzhen, as you've showed, is changing so fast. So everything is about speed. How can you keep up with this fast movement in your design processes then?

XL_ First the background of my partners and myself is the same. We all grew up in big cities and we ended up living in big cities. We love big cities. So that's the basic mentality, saying cities are the best for people. And then, when you do architecture you see your buildings actually don't do anything without an urban environment. The city is more important than architecture or the building itself. So every time, when we design a single building, we look at the environment of the site, the surrounding and think about what can we do with this building to make the environment - the city - better. That's the basic question which we ask ourselves every time. We do things from an urban perspective. It's not just saying: „I'm an architect. I'm trying to create an icon.“ A lot of people are doing it that way, we don't.

RR_ Millions of migrant workers coming into the city of Shenzhen. It's a very young population, a new population. Actually you were in a way a migrant worker as well. How do you deal with this aspect of identity and with identification processes?

XL_ This is a tough question. What you have to know

about those relatively low educated people that come to Shenzhen: All they want to do is to survive in the city. They try to make money. Most migrant workers lost their land and home. They were actually chased into the city. They have their own motivation to come to the city, find a job, making money and send money back home. That's the basic idea. So they make money, save as much as possible and send it home to build a big house. Much bigger than mine [laughing]. In the countryside they build their own houses with courtyards. That's the main idea. They don't really think they are part of the city. It's like their office or the factory they come for working. Do they have an identity problem? - No. They don't even think that way. But gradually a lot of people actually think they cannot leave the city after working there for several years. Like me, I started liking Shenzhen. I started a business and built a network. We get our projects much easier than in other cities. There is no reason for leaving. But we were always trying to get back to Beijing and then we even started a Beijing-office but it ended up, the Shenzhen-office is still bigger than the office in Beijing.

FO_ China is a field of experience and experimentation, for architecture especially. The conditions are given especially the conditions for high-density cities. Do you think, it will continue this way or will it stop somehow? Will there be saturation some day?

XL_ There are a lot of speculations about what hap-

pens next. In the year 2008 there was a big financial crisis, happening in the West and China has been hit as well. And we all thought there is going to be a downturn. It ends up, that nothing happened and the construction market is booming. There is even several times more work for architects. Chinese architects don't have to worry about job problems for the next 20 years. We can't do that much work. So that's why a lot of architectural firms come to China. They find a niche-market and do a lot of work there. And the interesting thing: It happens again, that seemingly the Chinese economy is going down at the end of 2011. And everybody is afraid the housing market is going down but nobody knows what's going on actually.

RR_ But the topics you are picking for your work, are quite tough ones. Kind of niches, like these urban parks, which in a way appear to me to be an incredible luxury, because you see your park and then these high rise buildings in the background, as if they are pushing into a "Fellini-like" atmosphere, endangering this park. And you're fighting for this little bit of public space still to be created. I notice actually the importance of public space. And there is one public space, you made with a museum and an exhibition space. And people suddenly start using this public space. Isn't this also a political move then finally to say: „We need also some public space, in these built-up areas“?

XL_ Well, it's part of our belief saying: „City is for everybody“. Not only for the rich people, because rich people can find their own place and space. They can buy big houses and build their own private clubs. They drive their own fancy cars. They don't need public space. The Public space is for people not that rich. We observed actually how the people utilize this kind of space. Most of them belong to the working class and some are retired people. They are using public space very heavily. We really think, public space is very significant for people with lower income. They come to the park, enjoying what the city can bring to them.

RR_ Let's come back to the issue of migrant workers. China is a big country...we know. If we would compare it to Europe then we would make a public space in Austria, a square, and for Danish and Italians at the same time and I think, we could not really imagine how that would work. Okay, you can say French and Polish, also the same problem of specific utilization. Is this a specific issue for you as well, that you need some idea of utilization of these spaces?

XL_ I'm not saying, we made creative spaces perfectly utilized. We are still working on it. We built one and we try to find out if it's working or not working. China is a place where people have still the guts to try things. We are allowed to make mistakes. Not major ones. If the structure collapses you go to jail,

that's for sure. But if the material is getting bad or a detail is not working that well, there's a leaking or something, nobody actually will make trouble to you. So that's something that makes you feel good. I was working in an American firm for several years. And all these regulations and codes actually restrict doing creative things. So it's quite different. We now have the chance to experience. Last month I was talking to Chinese star-architects. And one of them came up to denounce me. He was saying: "We don't need public space! Why we need public space?" Things like that ... he hated my concept. There is still a debate! But this is his belief and I have mine. But I'm not saying, I create a perfect public space. And you have to define first, what public space is. People are arguing about that.

FO_ Now we are talking about these huge cities with high density, as you showed us before, like at the east coast of China. But there are also the so-called "ghost cities". They are totally empty places, there is nobody! Why do we have this phenomena in China?

XL_ One of the major ghost cities, we are talking about, is in the North, in Mongolia. It's a coal-mine-town, it is called Ordos. The people there are very rich, but their money can't go anywhere. They don't invest outside so they just invest in their properties at home. That's the basic reason. I think, this is not the problem that they have too much buildings and nobody likes to live there. Because every building

which is built is sold out ... built - sold out ... built - sold out. So there is an investment-demand but no living-demand. That's why the phenomena is called "ghost town". I was working on some projects in that city and I wouldn't say exactly it's a ghost town. A part of the new town doesn't really have a lot of people because the roads are too wide. The road is 100 meter broad. I mean, how can you fill that with people with only about 100.000 inhabitants in that area. They made the wrong scale. And also, if you look behind, it is not a Chinese city problem. It is the problem of the whole system. They force you to make cities like this. China is not a country where everything is controlled by the central government. The central government has very limited power right now. All the local governments and private sectors can actually do a lot of things on their own. And they



fight each other too.

RR_ In the talks we had today while going through Graz, you explained to me the system of private housing in China. That the people can own their houses and apartments, but they don't own the land. The land is owned by the state. And after 70 years, they don't own it anymore. What would it mean in the context of the Chinese city, after 50 or 70 years, the state can get back the land and the building as well? Will the cities change or what is this political deal going to be, can you imagine?

XL_ Well, people are starting to question this and thinking about what will happen. But Chinese people are really optimistic towards the future, like „Don't worry, we'll be fine, no worry“. My partner Meng Yan was joking once, he said: „70-years-leasing, at the policy, is the most brilliant invention by the regime.“ Because, when the communists conquered the country, they got all the land rights. All the land belongs to the country, that means to the government. And this has been already done for many, many years. The people already think: „Okay, this is yours not mine.“ Then how can you suddenly just sell this back? This is a funny mentality. Why taking the power, taking the land and then returning the land to the people saying: „You can do anything with it. Destroy the country.“ - or something like that. You know, you can't do that. So that's more like a political or ideological concern. And you cannot suddenly sell this

land permanently to private people. They invented the idea people can rent this land for 70 years. Why 70 years? I don't know. Nobody knows. [laughing] We just guess: The lifespan of a building is probably 50 to 70 years. Okay, this is one reason. The second reason: You will die anyway in 70 years, right? So you will leave the problem to the next generation. This is the wisdom of the Chinese: „We don't deal with it. We leave this to the next generation.“ We are leaving a lot of things to the next generation, like environmental problems. We create a lot of ecological problems and we think the next generation is smarter and they will solve the problems. This is the same attitude. We don't care. Like we buy a house and give it to our children so they have to deal with it. Then the government can redo the policy anytime. The policy always can change, right? If you change one policy everything changes. The government can just pass a private-property-law. That means, after 70 years you can still pay some money to continue using the land. So that's going on another 50 years. That's not like the western type of policy like: „We have to sort it out right now, otherwise we fight.“ Chinese don't fight. If you allow Chinese people to live there, for like 70 years, they think that's a long time. The government takes advantage of this kind of mentality. Everybody is happy, no problem now. [laughing]

FO_ You won a competition in Hong Kong for the new integrated teaching building at the campus of

Chinese University of Hong Kong. Hong Kong has a stronger western influence than Mainland China. In that context, is it different to plan and build a project in Hong Kong than in Mainland China? What are the differences realizing projects comparing China and Hong Kong? Or even in Europe? Can you imagine how it would be to realize a project in Europe?

XL_ We entered the competition in Hong Kong and we got the first place. But it ended up that the commission went to a local office which only made third place. That's not going to happen in China or at least in Shenzhen without any reason. They just said, we've picked and select another office. It was really a surprise. Later, I talked to some architects in Hong Kong and they told me the situation is really bad. They said: „They just care for money. They don't understand culture. They don't love arts. It's really hard to do good architecture here.“ Everybody was complaining about this. They said: „You are so lucky, you are in Shenzhen, you do a lot of experimental designs.“ But I have difficulties as well in Shenzhen. But there's a difference between Shenzhen and Hong Kong. But I see, there's a lot of unfairness in Hong Kong. Like in my case, this is really unfair. I know this is not the corruption but bureaucracy. The owner in Hong Kong has almost absolute rights to do things. The government or the magistrates don't have much power to control what the private sector does. This is the difference. But in China on the other hand the government has too

much power. They do whatever they want to do. How can we make a move to the middle or at least close to the middle? That's a big challenge to us. Too much freedom or democracy is sometimes not good for a city, but it is worth it maybe. In China they waste a lot of money. This is a one party system. They want to self promote. They start to do huge constructions: like urban infrastructures, building woods, subways, railroads, just for themselves. That's ridiculous. This is something we utterly have to find a way to change.

RR_ When you come to Hong Kong you get this very strong image of all these high rise buildings, especially this kind of woods of social-housing. 70 floors or 35 floors, all built the last 30 years by the Hong Kong Housing Authority. And you notice that every few years, like 5 to 8 years, they have a new type. It's incredibly regulated, the whole market. Now, I noticed, you are kind of entering this market of subsidized or social housing in China. But they look very different. And we noticed when we talked to the guys of the Hong Kong Housing Authorities, they were really nervous about making slight changes, because they said: “The problem is there are so many people coming and want those houses, you cannot have individual spaces anymore.” It just has to be like this system and that system. Is this actually a topic also for you, when you work on social housing? It has to be completely regulated? Or how much freedom do you really allow in terms of individualizing housing



projects?

XL Well, when we do the social housing issue, I don't try to solve the problem. I still believe social housing has to be done by the government. It's not a private sector. If we collaborate with the private sector, like private developers to do social housing, we do something different. The main purpose is trying to prove that the social housing has not necessarily low quality. We can achieve relatively low cost with high quality and good design. So this is something we really try to approve. And I think we did it already. But it depends on the government side, if they stop to do this kind of low income housing or we call it affordable housing programs. And people in that area feel like that they are already become low class people. There are a lot of people

who don't like those places, but they need to love it! This is the problem.

Like we saw the social housing, we went to today in Graz. That is beautiful, really nice building!

We really need more of that kind of well-designed buildings. Doing good designs doesn't really cost much. That everybody in China should get that kind of thing will be a lot better. This is something we are trying to get to.

FO You realized this very fantastic urban Tulou-House, where you adapted the 300-years-old traditional Tulou typology into a new form of urban living. I didn't see any air-conditioning in this building. This is amazing, because in this part of China it's very humid and very hot. You normally need air-condition. All the typical residential high rise buildings in this area have all air-conditioning, even for each room. So for me the big question is: Why does your building work without air-conditioning? Is it because of the traditional Tulou architecture, like the thick walls and perforated concrete shell, which gives fresh air and sun shading? Or is it because of the low-income people not being used to having a good indoor quality without air conditioning?

XL This Tulou-prototype for social housing is designed for the lowest-class-people originally. We have three types we've surveyed. There are security guards. They are working in the community's neighbourhood. There are some cleaning ladies as

well. Those are the people with the lowest income in Chinese cities at the moment. The average income per person they made in 2007 is about 120 euro per month. That's really low. That's hardly enough to live actually. The average worker in Shenzhen gets already about 200 Euro per month salary. So we are trying to do design affordable housing for them. So absolutely that's why they don't have air-conditioning. If they had it, they wouldn't use it because they can't afford the high electricity bill. This is something we knew this is going to happen. What we did, is giving them private space at least but they also share a lot of facilities. And people asked a lot: „Why do you design buildings with only 5 storeys?“ By code in China all buildings higher than 7 storeys must have at least one elevator. We keep the building low, because we think the inhabitants can't afford an elevator. The people can walk up. This is something we calculated and designed in this project. Actually we found out, the round shape is very good for ventilation. When you come to the court yard in the building, you always feel some breeze coming. Even there is completely no wind outside. Because all the curved surface in the building grab some wind in. The inhabitants have some kind of circulated ventilation inside. That's pretty amazing. We raised the first wall, so the cooler air can come out and we even have a basement. The cool air from the basement can go up and bring up cool air to the apartments. There are also only one side orientated rooms, but we have 5 courtyards. The fresh air

can come through easily. And we designed a lot of windows to open for ventilation. This building is very much focused to the inner. Most of the people open up their doors for the ventilation. They don't have safety concerns. They created a very good community.

RR_ I think that's a really interesting issue, because you got this problem of tropical humidity and you counteract this humidity by creating a draft. So there's not less humidity, but due to the air moving you don't perceive the humidity as high as it is and the temperature you feel is lower. This is like our cars 30 to 40 years ago. There was no air-conditioning in cars but everybody was driving in the same climate as today. But nowadays we cannot buy a car without air-conditioning anymore. We completely forgot about the fact, at that time we just opened the window and there was the draft and we were happy. The wealthier we get, the more we get used to it and say there just has to be air-conditioning because of the humidity! This is a comparison when you go to Shenzhen and Hong Kong. In Hong Kong you see all the air-conditioning on the facades and you just say, we don't need it, because we are not used to that. And apparently it works as well.

XL_ Well, it would be good, if everybody had air-conditioning because it's very hot and the humidity is very high. But considering the income they would select not using it. And most people don't work at home. If you work you generate a lot of heat, right?

Even when you are thinking, your head gets hot sometimes [laughing]. The former president of Singapore said: „Without air-condition Singapore cannot accomplish this economical achievement.“ That's actually true.

RR_ If there are no questions from the audience this evening.....I have to say thank you, to you Xiaodu Liu!

XL_ You are welcome! Thank you very much too!

RR_ Thank you Xiaodu Liu for the talk, for the questions and the answers we had here.
Thanks to the audience to stay here that long to attend this very interesting lecture and this discussion.
Thank you to the Sto Stiftung for making this evening possible. And also making possible the second part of the evening, which is the opening of the buffet next door!
Thank you for coming. Have a nice evening. See you next week.

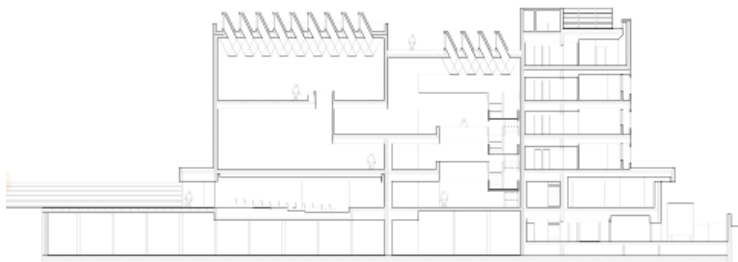


ANGELA PAREDES

NOVEMBER 21_2011

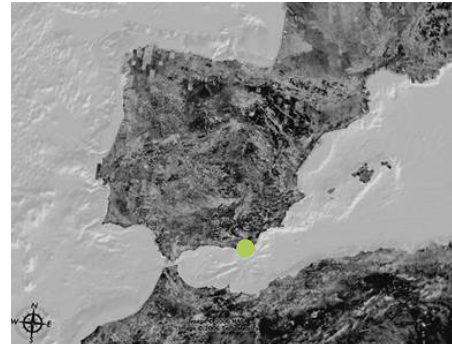
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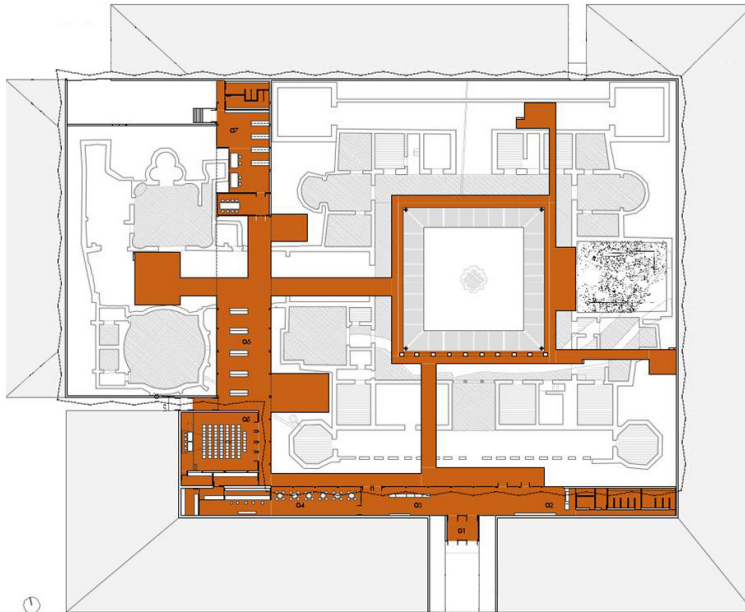
<“Almeria only needs a roof to be a large and excellent Museum of Prehistory”. [Siret]

But even though archaeology is the origin of the project, the city and the urban space are the aim of the project. The challenge was the creation of a public space in a very dense district that lacked open areas.>



LECTURE
MUSEUM IN ALMERIA_2005



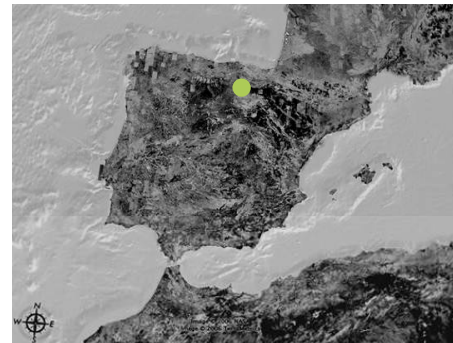
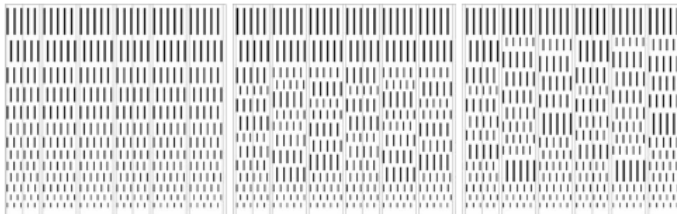


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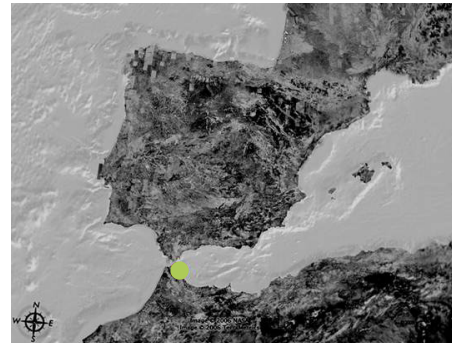
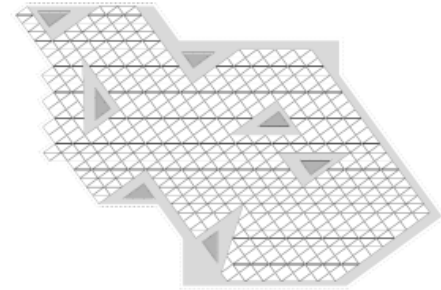
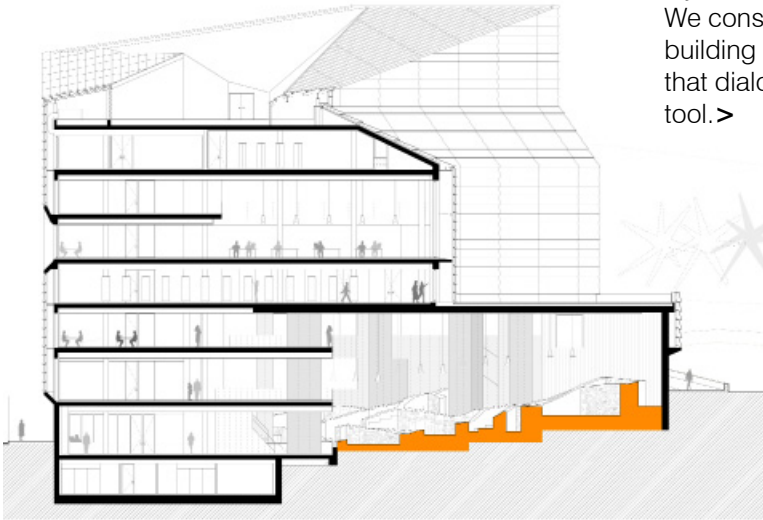
<...we decided not to rebuild but to suggest the way the finds were placed in the original location in an abstract canvas.

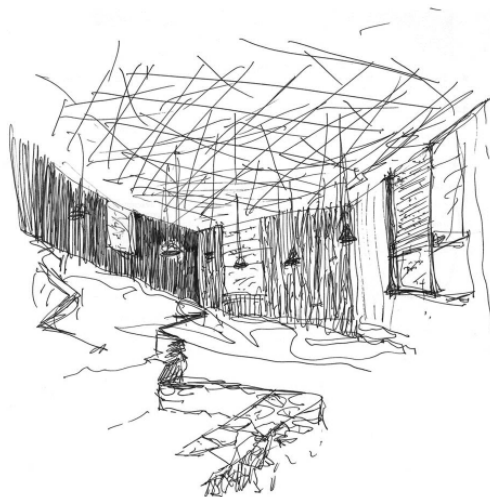
In La Olmeda, we had the plan but not the space. It was important to evoke the space, the height, of the rooms, not only to show the mosaics as a tapestry.>



ROMAN VILLA LA OLMEDA_PALENCIA_2009

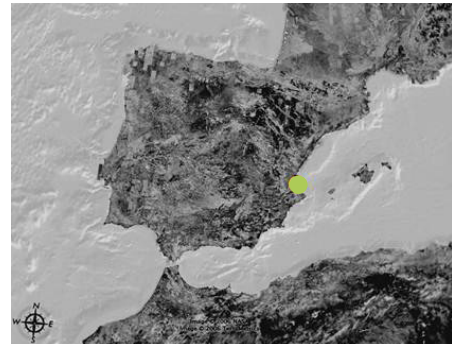
<...using the pieces of the past, working with the layers of time, to obtain a useful building.
We consider architecture as a continuous process, building upon the built space, with new materials that dialogue with old materials, using history as a tool.>



CEUTA PUBLIC LIBRARY_2012



<The proposed volume does not alter the Ausías March Park's layout, it respects the position of six existing mulberry trees, arranging the classrooms around them.
...with a simple local material, ceramics, and the existing trees, Gandia has now a new school full of activity.>



UPI UNIVERSITY GANDIA_2011

INTERVIEW



AP_ Ángela Paredes

RR_ Roger Riewe

MV_ Marisol Vidal

RR_ Thank you, Ángela, for this wonderful lecture. Those who have attended the talks last week and the week before know that the second part of the evening is a guided discussion and this week I will be teamed up by Marisol Vidal, with a Spanish background. So we are expecting a very interesting discussion and very down to earth questions about the Spanish architecture. Also I think it is very interesting for Marisol to be here this evening because she also made a PhD on Spanish contemporary architecture, concrete, education and low budget architecture.

MV_ Thank you too and welcome to Graz, Ángela. I had the chance once to kidnap you during a congress for ten minutes for one of the shortest interviews I have ever done ... just between two lectures

... but one of the densest, with the most information inside. The idea which came out of this conversation is something you have also explained today in the last example you have shown, with the trees and the materials you had found at the site, something which goes through your work: how you deal with the given in a very easy but intelligent way, with reduced means, to get the maximum effect and even the whole organisation of the logic. It becomes a very logical project. How does it work in your design process, is it really there from the very beginning, is it something which grows organically during the whole process?

AP_ Well, I ... I don't know if we have a method when we are thinking about this. I think that as ar-

chitects, we need to observe, to observe a lot and in competitions we always study the site. Because we think that architecture is strongly related to the site and to the place. And we also think that architecture must solve the problems of the client so we have to observe and we have to study the program and we have to give a good response to that. Because we think architecture is a very social activity, architecture is meant to make better the lives of the people that live inside that architecture. I think that it is only a question of time: time for studying the site and the program, time enough to develop the proposal. Sometimes you go quickly and then you have to go back again and further on again. It is also important to have the knowledge of past times; it is very useful to study what happened there and to imagine what can happen after the building is completed.

RR_ An interesting thing was when we asked the people we we're inviting here for the November talks to lecture for forty-five minutes. And they thought "Uh, this is a surprise, it is not one hour, only forty-five minutes. So what to say in forty-five minutes?" So Boštjan Vuga came up with one project, Xiaodu Liu brought a lot of projects but he only talked about a few and you came up with four. Four very special projects you wanted to talk about and show us this evening. So I think this, in connection with what you said, that you don't really have a design guide in your office, but all projects you have shown to us are in a certain way similar and very site specific. Is this

a very special issue for you and your architecture?

AP_ I thought a lot about this because if I was going to give the lecture in Spain maybe this evening I would talk about one project in detail. But I thought... "It is not Spain, so there will be people who don't know the other buildings" and so I think it was important to communicate our way of doing architecture more than explaining in detail just one project. And why four? Well I didn't want to come with lots of projects, because then it is a mess and you cannot remember the first and last one. In any case we don't have so many projects because we are not a very large office. So I thought that maybe with four projects I could explain better our position in contemporary architecture, our position towards the site, towards history, towards the budget, towards public means and towards public buildings.

MV_ You said before that you don't have that many projects. I don't know if the audience knows that you are a small or say, medium size office with a very constant production. There are not a lot of them but they are well done projects. In the details we can see that you take the time you said before to analyse, to let them grow, to mature. It is not just an image for the magazine. There is a lot of architecture to be seen inside: the vertical connections, the natural light. How can you afford to take so much time for your projects now that everything has to be done faster and faster?

AP_ In La Olmeda we had ten years [laughs]. No, but really, life goes too fast, and we need more time for thinking. Maybe this is also a good part of our bad economical situation. Now we shall have more time to think about things and to make things better. Sometimes going too fast is not good for architecture. I think it is not good for anything. But yes, sometimes everything goes very fast. We don't have so much production: we like very much to have in our office always one competition, one developing project and one building under construction. I think this is a good combination for an architect because you have all the stages of architecture and then the projects don't get mixed up with each other.

RR_ Coming back to the projects you have shown here, three of them were built upon historical or antique sites. I think this is one of the most difficult challenges in architecture. We have to continue a discontinuous history, it has stopped at a certain time and you tried to continue it again. At the same time I think that going through these historical sites and excavations is something very abstract. You must actually produce a kind of imagination of the past and what has really happened. Tourist guides have the biggest ability, they can immediately tell you where the kitchen was, and the dining room, and the library. We as architects take more time thinking about these things, how these houses might have worked, how the old cities might have worked. So I think that the way you deal with this

very abstract architecture is something which is very logical and it is also a big part in a contemporary architecture discourse as well. In how far you actually try to show the images of the past, is it an image or just an abstract image, the one which you create? Is this also a point in your discussion when you work on your projects?

AP_ I think it is an abstract image because really, I don't know if there are any archaeologists here, but they don't really know how buildings were in the past. When we were in La Olmeda, the chief, a very important professor from the Valladolid University, asked us: "You are an architect ... Where would you situate the kitchen? Because I don't know where it was... Do you think it could be there or there?" I think they imagine a lot. They study ancient times with fragments of the past but they don't really know how the architecture was. So why not having the new architecture and some of the old architecture just in dialogue? I think the best way is not to touch each other: If there is a dialogue and they don't touch I think the problems are solved in part. Another important aspect is that it is good to have all these excavations being part of a new building that has its own activity, not just like a frozen image of the past.

RR_ Many years ago, in my former life I worked on the restoration site of Pergamon in Turkey. This is actually one of the few restoration sites which have been run by an architect. All the other sites are

run by art historians or archaeologists, rebuilding historical sites. So the attitude is completely different and this architect said: "Let's try to rebuild as little as possible just to get an imagination of the proportion and the rest is absolutely free for your own imagination and for imagining how the space was utilized". I think it was a really architectural attitude.

MV_ In these projects where you have to deal with archaeological finds we can see that your approach to material matters is a very contemporary one: you used the metal mesh or plastic materials and so on. How do you cope with material matters in other projects? When does material come into your design process?

AP_ I think material must be considered from the very beginning. I always tell my students that you cannot imagine a project and then, when it is finished: "Now, well, is it going to be metal or ceramic or what?" It is not just like a coat. Material is much more important, I think it is completely in the origin of the project. Because it is completely different to design thinking that something has to be very light and transparent or to design thinking that you want a heavy or opaque building. So I think it must be from the very origin and then, what type of material? I think architects need to have a common sense. If you are building in, you know, Almería, it is not common sense to use materials that come from the other side of the world when we have there very



beautiful marble in the nearby quarries. And if I am building in the Mediterranean area, there are the best manufacturers of ceramics in that part of Spain. I don't like to build in context and I don't have to build with tiles just because everything around are tiles, but I like to use the materials that are logical in that moment. I was remembering that when I visited Louis Kahn, the Dallas Museum, the Kimbell Art Museum, everything is travertino, this Italian marble and there was an architect that worked with Kahn in that project and I asked him "Why are you using Italian marble here in America, in the central part of the United States? It must be very expensive" and he said: "No, it wasn't expensive at all, because these large pieces of marble came inside the ships as ballast. It was not the best travertine marble, it was just taken for that purpose, and then Kahn went

there and said, why not use this?" It was logical to use that. In Almería the palm garden is full of palms although we had orange trees in the project, but one day we went to the port and there was a very large ship that came from Egypt with enormous palms that were in the port and he was selling the palms for literally nothing! So, we said: "Why not use the palms we have here instead of orange trees?" I think that architects must be logical, because architecture costs a lot of money.

MV_ Back to your logic of materials and the project in Almería: you said before that the marble was cut in different sizes because of economical reasons and this is how you came up with the composition of the façade, with this patchwork of forms. This is something which happens a lot in your works, I think: there is something given, maybe a restriction of the material or of the given techniques the local workers are used to, and you use it in a way that this is not a restriction anymore but a logic itself. It is what really makes the façade, so that you cannot say: "Well, it is a pity, but they have to work with these sizes". It is actually the opposite: it is the best thing that could happen! I think it is very common in Spain, working like that: to see what there is, and how to make the best out of it. Is it something you make so to say on purpose or does it just happen in your every day work?

AP_ I guess it really happens, because all architects

have a lot of problems during their building process. You have to solve problems every day and this is maybe a way of solving these problems.

RR_ You spoke about the very tight budgets in the projects which you kind of appreciate because you are then forced to go to the limits. But I think there is also something else ... or I assume there must be something else, which actually leads to this kind of architecture you are making, not only your architecture but may I say also this family of architects in Spain where we always, you know, look very closely and say: "Well, this is really interesting work." Something which is really specific, like when you open a book and immediately know that this is Spanish architecture. So, I think there is also something behind it due to the education you have in Spain. As far as I know, you are not only trained as architects but you have also certain degrees as engineers as well. There is always an engineering program part of the architecture study program. Is this something which influences your work till today?

AP_ Not very much, I think years ago the technical part, the engineering part of architecture was more important than now in universities. I think that the technical part of architecture is very important for our work because architecture must deal with these technical issues. I think architecture is not only an art but also a technical activity. And this I think must be very important in universities.

RR_ You are teaching in Madrid, teaching studios as far as I know. So, what is important for you to tell the students? Of course you can say materials are important as well but then, it's not only about the knowledge of the materials, and this is actually a big knowledge, you also have to have to be able to use the right material or to be able to manipulate the material and it has to be a long design process as well. Isn't it very tough for the students?

AP_ Well I teach project design and in our group, in our department, we really want to teach that architecture is everything: you can't separate material and construction from structure, from the site. So everything is completely mixed up together. You can't separate, everything must come ahead together. Sometimes it is very difficult for the students to think in all those aspects of architecture at the same time but we really must show them that they have to work in this way. Sometimes they don't go very fast because they have to think in so many different aspects in architecture, but I think it is very important for the results to have all these aspects going together at the same time.

MV_ The lecture is called "positions in contemporary architecture": how does your work at university help you to define your own position in contemporary architecture as an office and how does your professional work influence the way you teach students?

AP_ It is very good for our practice to have this link to the university because both Ignacio and I teach in Madrid and also in Barcelona or Pamplona and it is very important for us because I find that young people, students, really are the best, you know, for thinking about all those things. If I stay at my office I only have all my problems in my head and if I go to the university I can think about all these aspects that are so important for architecture. The university refreshes our own work at the office.

RR_ That's why we always like going to the university, then we have no problems anymore. [laughs] Many of your projects are actually competitions you have participated in, you've entered and you've won. With this very detailed and intellectual architecture it is always a problem in competitions to communicate this level of thinking, you know? Also the things you have always have to communicate like architecture and landscape architecture and urbanity, architecture and scale. How many competitions must you actually make to win some of them?

AP_ Well, really I think we win one each seven to eight competitions. So we design a lot of competitions but it's just like a sport.

RR_ But when making these competitions, do you specifically choose the one you do, because they are mainly public buildings?

AP_ Yes, we choose them. These past years in Spain, there were really beautiful competitions for public buildings and we chose buildings we liked, just because we liked the program or the site, but not only cultural buildings. Today I have talked about archaeology, but really, we have entered competitions for social dwellings also, we have built social dwellings because they are very interesting for us, the relation to the city or to the town. But we always choose them specifically.

MV_ What are the next projects you are working on? Which competitions have you won recently?

AP_ The last competition we won was a museum in Mérida. It is a museum for a Visigothic collection, very near to the Roman Moneo Museum in Mérida and we just finished the project last week. It is not a large museum but it's very beautiful work because we must design not only the building but also the museography and all the inner parts of the museum. That was the last we won, and after that we entered two more competitions. The one we are working on now is a building in the north of Spain, in Galicia, in La Coruña. It is an old building that has to be refurbished for a new use. And I think this is now a new way of designing a building in Spain: reusing old buildings and giving them a new use, changing the use, putting them again in use for new activities.

RR_ When designing these museums, libraries and

schools when we see your competition renderings, there are of course always a few people around, utilizing the space but when we see the pictures of the realized project there's beautiful architecture but there are no people. Where did they go to?

AP_ This is a good question. Sometimes when it's finished we take the photographs and then we don't take new photographs again. But not at social dwellings because it's much more difficult to keep them in a correct use but now our buildings are much nicer and full of people. Sure, we have to take new photographs now. In some cases, such as the theatre or in La Olmeda, the buildings actually look nicer with the human scale.

MV_ Most of the buildings you have shown are somewhere in Spain, spread through the whole country. Now you're working in a far corner, in Ceuta, approximately 1.300 kilometres away from the last project. Most of the Madrid-based offices of your generation have built very little in Madrid itself. How does that happen? Do you like travelling so much?

AP_ We are actually lucky, because in Madrid we have built two blocks of social dwellings, one was an European competition and also the Olympia Theatre, so we have been lucky to build in our own city. But otherwise I don't know. We are not lazy so we enter competitions all over Spain, or even in other countries. We entered competitions in Italy, in fact we

won two competitions in Italy, but they weren't built. I don't mind travelling and looking for work far away from Madrid.

MV_ It gives you also more time to think about it, maybe? Gives some kind of perspective, being far away from your site ...

AP_ Well, maybe.

RR_ The projects you've realized are in a way in a Spanish context. Would the way of your working really differ when you enter a competition in France or Germany or even beautiful Austria?

AP_ [laughs] I think it's not so different. It's like in medicine, if a doctor is with someone that is ill, then it's more or less the same if the patient is Chinese or German. So for us architects, it's not so different, is it? If I am supposed to enter a competition in Italy or in Zurich, the way of working is similar, the way we work in architecture. Another different aspect is the technical part because in each country we need different technical support, different engineers because of differing regulations. But, for instance, all the competition rules for the European Community are more or less the same for all of us. When the building process starts it's different because of the regulations and so, but architecture in my opinion is more or less the same.

RR_ Isn't there also the advantage when you are not local, you also get the possibility of seeing it from the outside, of perceiving from the outside a very specific situation? Because sometimes I think when you're just local and work in your own city it might be a problem as well because you know too much, which keeps you from being very clear about certain things or having a very clear position. But when you're from the outside you always have the view, the perception from the outside to see things in a different way. Which I think might be an advantage.

AP_ Maybe.

RR_ I'm trying to move to this part that you're not working in Madrid, that you're working in these other parts where you're very clear about how to pinpoint the architecture there. The thing which interests me at the moment as well is the economical situation in Spain, which is very tough, very tight. I know that many young architects go back to university to make their PhD to be able to go into a university career because they just ran out of work. There was a lot of work before, which is not there anymore because of this economical crisis and in a way it's a little bit similar to the fifties, the Franco time, when Spain was actually a very poor country but the architecture was very strong. American money was pushing the country, there was a lot of development and everything got going in a way. So it is a strong point you made here, you said if there's a tight budget the architec-

ture can be really good. But as an architect you also have to make a living if the budget is always lower and you calculate your fees in percentage of the building, it's getting less and less. So how far can you really survive in this competitive situation?

AP_ Now the situation is not good because first of all private building stopped and then a few years afterwards public buildings were stopped as well because there's no money. But I think instead of completely stopping the building process, building activity must change completely. I am sure there's a new way, another way of making architecture. Not the way we have made architecture in the past ten years. You are talking about architecture in the fifties and that's true, some of the best architectures in Spain have been built during those years. Many

of the best architectures in Spain and of the best buildings in Spain were built with very little means but with lots of energy, with lots of emotion and with lots of intelligence. So I am sure architecture is not only related to money. I am sure that architects who come from university now are very well prepared to deal with the situation and to open their way with a new way of approaching architecture, maybe with rebuilding, reusing and recycling.

MV_ It is possible to find an optimistic point of view, because much of what was built in the last years of the economic boom when in one year more housing was built in Spain than in Italy, Germany and France together, which of course wasn't needed. So this kind of not sustainable system was actually ruining the country. And we also have to think that a lot was built, but 80-90% of it was very, very bad. We've all seen in magazines with these exceptional projects with high quality coming from Spain, but there's also a lot of very bad architecture being produced in the country. Is this crisis putting the focus again on some other aspects? Because quality is going to matter again. Maybe this line you have kept through this boom, not trying to jump on this fast train, but taking your time for your projects and staying true to your line, this might become more relevant now. In this sense I think the crisis really is a very good chance, and architects will find a solution, a new position on architecture. Is this an issue that's being talked about now in some circles?



AP_ Indeed, that can be a solution, not to build more but to transform what is built and to reuse. You know, there are so many empty buildings around the Spanish coast and all this empty, low-quality architecture can be transformed. So maybe this is a way of approaching and solving these problems.

RR_ So there's always something architects can finally do.

AP_ An architect is good for everything. [laughs] Architects can design a chair, a lamp, a skyscraper, I don't know, whatever.

RR_ I think this is a very nice closing word for the session this evening because it's so positive and we always worry about the next crisis coming up. We see Greece is there and Iceland is there and Spain is there and everyone is holding on to his money and hoping it won't touch his own bank account. So I think this is a very positive view you actually gave, saying "No, if there's a crisis we can be even better than if we had too much money".

So Ángela Paredes, may I thank you very much for this wonderful evening, for these great projects you showed us and for this discussion. Thank you, the audience, for paying attention this evening. I am very sorry to say that we are not going to be here next week, there's no talk next week, but only on the 12th of December. Yes, indeed, November Talks on the 12th of December with David Adjaye. Special thanks

to the STO-foundation, which has made this evening and the evenings before possible. They provided financial support as well as the buffet next door, which we now can enjoy. Thanks for coming, see you next time on December 12th.



DAVID ADJAYE

DECEMBER 12_2011

LECTURE_75

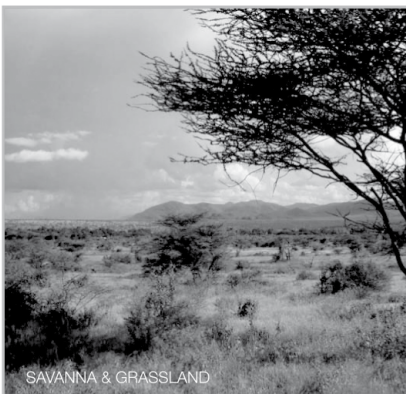
INTERVIEW_83

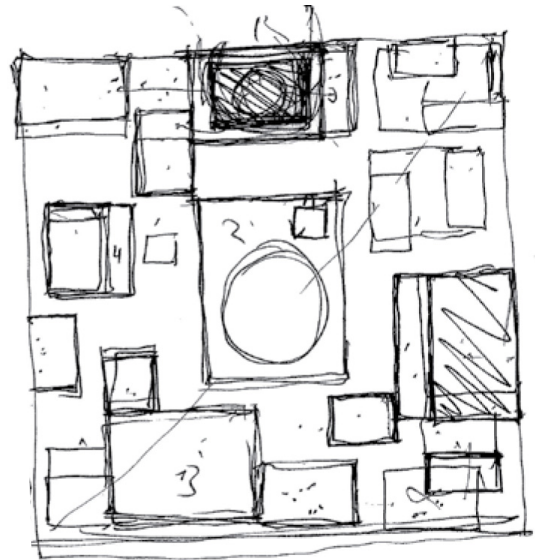
- THE MAGHREB
- DESERT
- THE SAHEL
- FOREST
- SAVANNAH & GRASSLAND
- MOUNTAIN & HIGHVELD



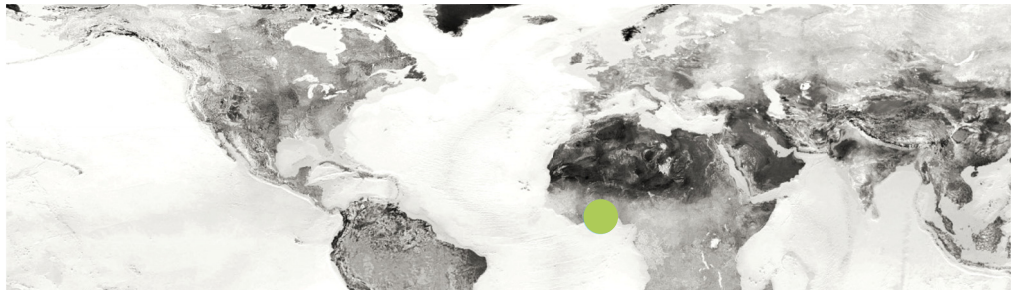
<... a study, which looks at the phenomenon of the continent through two things: architecture and geography. The map presents this continent in six parts as a regional substrategy, as a blueprint for development...>

LECTURE
AFRICAN METROPOLITAN ARCHITECTURE



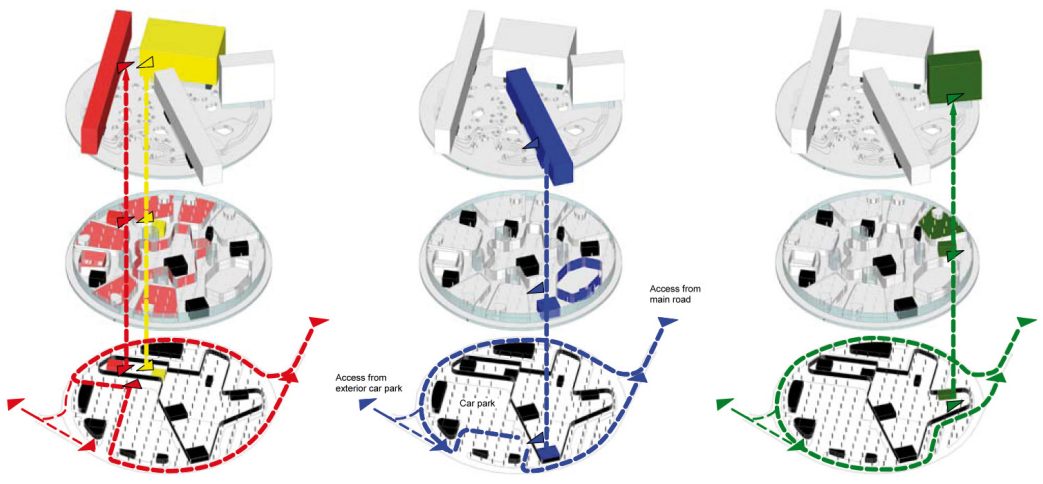


< ... a landscape plate, that we elevate and as a carpet put in the infrastructure of the school and then surround it with agriculture. The architecture of the forest is an architecture of roof. >

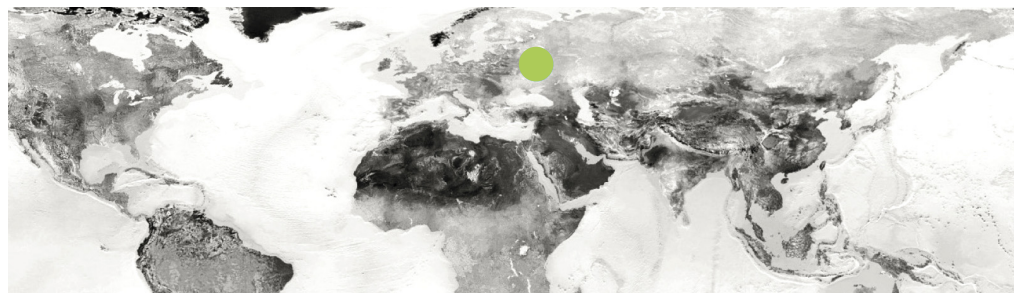


ELMINA COLLEGE_ELMINA_GHANA_2010





SCHOOL
 WELLNESS CENTRE
 LONG TERM ACCOMODATION
 SHORT TERM ACCOMODATION
 ADMINISTRATION

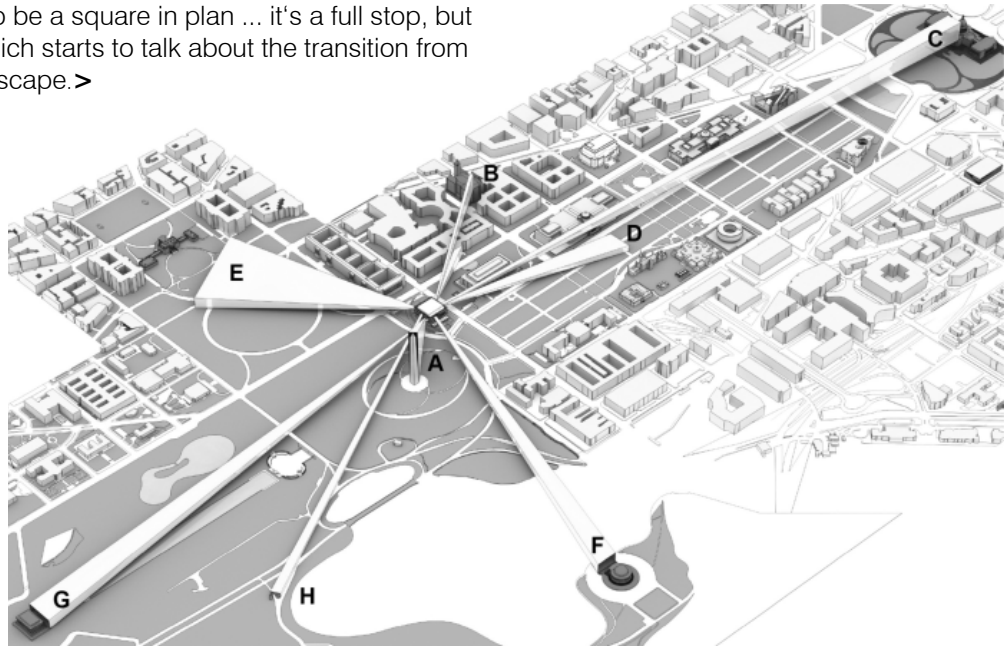


MOSKOV SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT_SKOLKOVO_RUSSIA_2010

< The idea of the school is a place of encounter. There is no system except for the landscape to work with, so the idea of nature becomes the organizing system, which sets up architecture ... but also not, allowing a kind of blur to occur.>



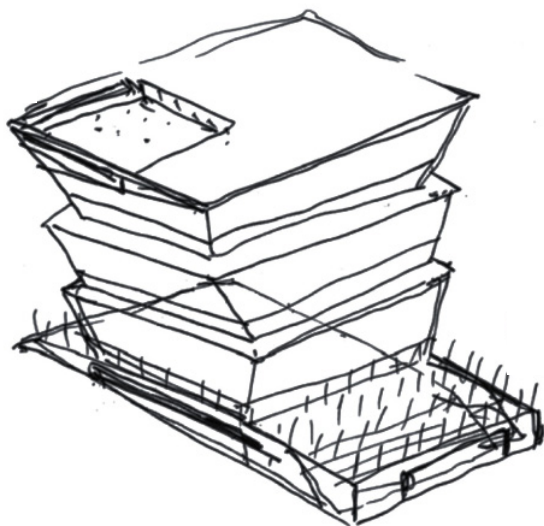
<This building had to be a square in plan ... it's a full stop, but it's also a pavilion which starts to talk about the transition from the urban to the landscape.>



- A. WASHINGTON MONUMENT
- B. FEDERAL TRIANGLE
- C. THE CAPITOL
- D. MALL PANORAMIC
- E. THE WHITE HOUSE
- F. JEFFERSON MEMORIAL
- G. LINCOLN MEMORIAL
- H. MLK MEMORIAL



SMITHSONIAN NMAAHC_WASHINGTON_USA_2009



INTERVIEW



DA_ David Adjaye

RR_ Roger Riewe

UG_ Uta Gelbke

UG_ First of all thank you for coming to Graz and for giving us an insight in your work. While the slideshow is starting in the background showing some of your projects, I think it would be good to go back a little before we come to the current projects because I think it's really interesting that over the past 10 years, which is not a really long time, you have done these huge steps going from residential in a sort of Victorian London suburb setting and moving into public building. It seems like it was a pretty conscious decision to do that. Can you explain a bit why you decided to do that?

DA_ I think when I was studying in London it was a time when there was a large debate, first a debate between postmodernism and deconstruction, which

was hilarious that it was even a debate, but it was a very strong debate. And then later there was a kind of theoretical debate between people like Rem and Eisenman on the positioning of architecture and the kind of development of architecture. And in a way it sort of positioned itself very much in my theoretical basis out into the world. The theoretical basis underpinned the way in which the world was for it. I was fascinated by that, but loved it and actually found that the discourse had become disconnected, that in a way in it's kind of naval gazing it started to kind of for me disconnect from certain fundamentals about the nature of city. In a way for me I believe and move through a sort of people probably that all believe in the city, that the notion of the city is really important. And I thought that the discourse seemed

to not be. You know what was kind of problematic for me, was not so much what style was the kind of future rather trying to define radicality but what was now. And what I found missing was that I couldn't hear any discourse about public life anymore; in London anyway. The discourse about public life was almost abstracted, it was almost like there was a taking for granted of this and that we all knew what it was so we didn't need to discuss it, but I actually didn't. So there was a multiple set of use on that. So when I started my practice I said that I critically want to not become obsessed with this sort of shouting match that was occurring but wanted to systematically just engage directly with the notion of what is private now and what is public now. I deliberately avoided commercial not as a kind of against it or anything like that, but I just was very interested in that polemic between the public person and the private person. And in a way that's what organized the first works really. The first houses, Elektra House and Dirty House were responses to the notion of the private citizen, and the private citizen this time was an artist, the idea of the artists and the retreat, and then by the time that Dirty House came out was the artist and the notion of work and retreat. So what is the retreat and what is both. And then conversely opposite to that Idea Store, the first competition I won, the first one that I went for, I went for it because it was about libraries being reinvented. I thought ok this is exactly where I want to position my conversation. It wasn't just an ordinary library, it was a library

being remade again to try and retool it for the society that was being seen in London. You know for me this discourse about when you have a metropolitan city and it's continually in flux I think you always have to catch up with what you think you assume. What you assume is not always what it is because it keeps moving and one collective set of memories that you might have, which might inform a certain idea about things, shifts as a sort of generation comes along. And so I found the Idea Store project was a really important opportunity to reframe what is public, what is the public. And from that in a way winning Idea Store helped me kind of want to then frame the next set of competitions and projects that we went for. So we only went for specific projects, but in the beginning it was really these two discourses and it's still that same discourse. Now that the projects are much bigger, it's still: What is the role of public? What is this public citizen? And then I didn't show any houses this time, sorry because it was only 45 min, but I could show you the new houses in another lecture, which has evolved into a whole other set of studies.

RR_ So do you think these first projects were very important steps in your career, the private houses and the library projects. And after that you also started working with artists and galleries. Does this also help you in kind of figuring out the public and private and the distinction between them?

DA_Absolutely. I mean in a way what has happened is that there are now four areas. In a way working with artists started as an informal scenario. It really was because I chose to go to the Royal College because in a way I became very interested in the discussion that was happening with the new emerging group of artists. There were people like Chris Ofili, Olafur Eliasson. All these guys were these new kind of people who were thinking about Arts in ways, where the boundary of the subject was no longer important. But the ability to make works, which had a kind of transformatory quality was more profound. And I found myself being attracted to these guys and finding more synergy with these guys. So I started to collaborate with them, firstly by helping them make their studios or helping them with their exhibitions. But later this became full blown collaborations in the sense of that they would ask me to work as a character, a specific person with them. You know with Chris, we got to a point where he said „Look, I need the discussion with you which is about what is the native space for painting“. And in a way he doesn't want to say that he is answering that himself, because it's really through the discussion that was occurring. So we started to become co-authored in these works, as a double authoring and with Olafur the same thing happened, and recently it's Richard Prince. So I found that I could prototype a lot of thinking with artists and I could quickly work through research ideas with them. So that became very important and it still is. We are still working with

artists. We do collaborations all the time. The last part very quickly is that over the last 10 years this research that we have just done on Africa has been hugely instrumental and supporting in the way in which the office is now making work. So in a way that it's now set up in the office that there is now this what I'm calling the part of the office which just goes a little bit deeper than just waiting for the client brief and the project, but takes on topics and then completes them when they need to complete them. And for me I'm very interested in the notion of geography and the city. They are becoming my two polemics, which is what the whole Africa thing was about. But geography in the city and landscape in the city is becoming something where I get very, very tuned into right now.

UG_It seems like you are constantly crossing boundaries not only geographically or politically, but as you just said, in a disciplinary way as well. Is that something you need to do to keep yourself going or what is the reason behind it? Is that your sort of dynamics, your speed that you need for your projects?

DA_Probably. No I think for me the way I am interested in practicing architecture is the psyche, it's a psychological thing. I need to set up scenarios that feed the agency for me to do things. I am very gripped by the art of making buildings, but I am also very gripped by what buildings are in society now and what they mean. I think that there is a profound po-

sitioning that I think is very important. So whatever I need to get me to that position I will do. So it started off with collaborating with artists in an unorthodox manner, but just working with artists has not been deep enough for me so the way of research has started a wave of getting deeper information and some specific information that I can then really specifically use. And that's become important. If I need to do that across the boundary, yes, then I'll do it.

RR_ Was this actually a deliberate strategic move in planning your career that you started off with the public, the private? Then you seek for specific clients, which you obviously got, having a very strong focus on working with artists, and finally the focus on Africa, the capitals of Africa in their urban landscaping. So these are like very obvious big steps now. Was this very deliberate, these kinds of obvious moves you made?

DA_ I wouldn't say it was completely combative, but definitely the relationship with artists and the private and public work was immediate. The minute I started working on my own this was an agenda that was absolutely in the front of my mind. The relationship with artists almost grew organically, because I did my masters with them and my first clients were artists. So in a way I was already in a dialogue and collaborating with them, and the whole set of things that have come from working with artists grew organically and as it grew I became more conscious,

how important that was for me in terms of practice. The research really came almost as I was hitting the ceiling where I needed more information and my dialogue with artists or the work that I was doing wasn't giving me enough space. A project was too fast for the research that I wanted to do. So in a way the Africa project is the first, but actually before Africa there was a project on Europe. I did a whole mapping exercise which we called Europolis, which is understanding maps in Europe and how maps figure make space or make prefigure the notion of space. So that was the first idea I had and it took about three years. It was presented as a manifesto and it was presented in the art world not in the architecture world, so nobody knows about it. But it was something that was very important and gave a lot of confidence to that research. And then in a way Africa for me was the next big topic that hadn't been touched and we were startled to get a lot of attention on the concept. So people were starting to say „Come over!“, so I say „Look, I want to work here but I need to work here when I understand very specifically what the issues are for me“. It took me a long time to understand even as an African, a person with African descent, how I wanted to work on the continent and I needed to formulate a position for myself, because I just didn't want to go in just almost mechanically and say „Oh this is how I build and I just build!“. I need for the work to have a position to drive it. I can't just do it. I find it not satisfying.

UG_ While we are talking about the Africa project and the mapping exercise that you did where you showed the political map, the geographical/ topographical map and this is influencing the architecture. So would you say there is an architectural map of Africa?

DA_ Yes. There is a third map which needs to be done in a way. It's really funny, because the book is really like an archive, it's really a sharing of research with the public it's really for me also a way of talking about being a public person, because in a way I could have just kept that data, and kept it private. And then I could just do five books of that data, which are smaller things. But I thought that actually there is something more interesting about saying just share the data. I know what the data tells me now. I have had a head start, but when I look at these images I can see so much in them, then maybe for you, who is looking at it, you are like overwhelmed by what these images are. I am already analyzing, what these things, these small nuances, which were in the beginning maybe also exotic to me, started to mean as I grooved them. So the book was to say, you know what, let me just go as far as grouping them and to set it up as an archive, because in the way of documenting it in the last 10 years it sort of has an archival quality. It's a set of moments before maybe an urban explosion is occurring. I mean actually some of the cities that I am talking about have already changed significantly

since I documented them. Already in 10 years. If you go to Dakar, there's so many towers now, which makes it so interesting.

RR_ I think trying to document Africa is really amazing, it's also an incredible challenge that you are taking trying to cope with it. In a way Africa as a continent is like a blind spot. You have got Europe, you have got America and South America. You have got China or Asia. You have got the Emirates. And that's about it. And the rest nobody really knows how to deal with. Ok, a little bit of Koolhaas with the Lagos project, now Francis Kéré is coming up with fantastic work. So I think it's really astonishing that you can dig into it. But is it only for the work you will be doing in Africa or is it also for the other work? Will it also be influencing the other work you are doing now?

DA_ Can you stop the way in which the influence affects work? I don't know. You know, I saturated myself for close to 11 years in this thing so it is affecting some of my sensibilities. I think what is actually challenged and made me look at more profoundly is I really started to question notions of porosity much more. In a way I think I sort of closed down the sense of porosity through a sort of European education that I had and I think I am really rethinking the whole thing again, because I forgot how powerful geography is and how powerful that geography can augment different notions of porosity. That really, if you start to observe it, is profound, how people use

the city, use matter to organize the way in which they do with public-private interaction, rich or poor, that is interesting. So it's been fascinating, watching that and then matching and overlapping that with what I have been obviously stepped into in Europe.

UG_ Yes, porosity is I think a really interesting topic. Your early works, the residential works, were the total opposite then, they were the secluded more introvert spaces. A comment I read was „they are lacking curb appeal“ so they are just putting up this distance. When you come more into the public buildings and the Africa project now, you know, growing larger in scale, porosity is something that naturally comes in. Maybe it's especially in Africa that porosity is the issue. But it seems to translate into the projects that we have seen now, which you



presented today, this sort of lack of boundaries or frontiers. You said about the Moscow school, that this idea of hybridity and communication is exactly that, you think. I think it's great how this is coming back all together.

DA_ It has totally affected that sense of work and when we get briefings by clients we accelerate those parts when there is a specific public. We have the data to support it so we talk about the possibility of porosity. And in a way porosity is not just for its own sake. I think it has a very democratizing agenda. I think a very edifying agenda in society makes for very strong civic qualities. I think the more you can dissolve the better it gets actually. It's just my own position and I am interested in that in terms of public life. The notion of how you dissolve is very profound.

RR_ You actually showed four projects which all have to do with education, research and communication. I think it was really good what you said, that most things you learn are actually by communicating between each other and not teachers telling the students what to do. I know you are also doing documentaries for the BBC and trying to communicate architecture. Is that now a different level of communication or a very specific level of communication trying to get the message across to a different audience?

DA_ It's now about eight years since I did those pro-

grams and I did that because I felt that it's interesting. I was talking to several friends of the AA and we were like okay, if we accept the role of being public people, if architecture is a public art, then should we not try to kind discuss the concerns we have to the widest audience and in the widest arena not just preaching to the converted? So in a way the whole sort of interlude with television was an attempt to say why don't we engage the widest set of mediums. I enjoyed it very much, it actually taught me a lot about the way in which information is given to the public; the way in which things are packaged and edited and the way in which information is consolidated and then presented. I learned a lot from that. The problem for me was that it's such a full-time job. I have a lot of respect for television presenters now. It's actually not that easy, so it's impossible to do that and not do all the work. So it was an interlude, an important interlude and for me it was about this discourse of publicness and to become public too.

RR_ Just try to give us some sort of insight, because you know when we give interviews here on TV, I don't know if it's an Austrian specificity but they always say "Please use simple sentences. Think of our audience. And not longer than 35 seconds, because they cannot concentrate any longer." Was it the same for you as well?

DA_ Presenting architecture it was all about reduction. Reduction without being simplistic that was the

trick for me. How to reduce without being simplistic, because there is a tendency with a lot of programs that have come out, which become very simplistic and trivializing, because there is a slightly comedic agenda to it. But I think you can do it, you can reduce complex information into communicable. I think that it's all part of the fact that we are actually very disengaged from the public. I mean we don't talk to the public really.

Sometimes buildings become very expressive and like Moscow turned out to be very expressive but actually it was never meant to be overly expressive. I wasn't trying to make an overly expressive building, I was trying to make a soft building in this landscape but it actually ended up being this powerful thing. So that was a bit of a shock! But actually if you look at Whitechapel, structurally it was very daring and tried to do a lot of things but it had the context of the city to frame what the things were. So you know the shifts for me or the radicality that you make contributes to an understanding of the place, not the understanding of the thing itself. That for me is the driver. The radicality has to contribute to the understanding of the place. Otherwise if it's just radicality informing itself, it's so self-referential, it's kind of irrelevant.

UG_ I think that's probably why critics are always struggling with categorizing you and your work, because it shifts all the time. You are giving them a hard time ...

DA_ Well, I just think that also I had very interesting conversations with the critics about what it is about and what you are trying to do and, you know, I said „I am trying to position the work so that it's actually not about the objects that you are collecting, it's about the entire body of the work.“ I think some people practice architecture where it's ten objects. I am not interested specifically in that, I am interested in an idea, architecture is an idea, a body of work.

UG_ So is architecture a testing ground?

DA_ For society, yes. Architecture is totally the prototyping ground for emerging society, completely.

UG_ So is architecture shaping society or society shaping architecture?

DA_ Who could tell? It's a wonderful helix that you think you influence it. You do something and it changes everybody's perception and then they use it in a way that changes your perception. The things that people do in the Moscow building I didn't even perceive, you know, and some of the hybridity that is now occurring. As I said, these swimmers coming in and taking over that section of the pool and it's like there's a whole spectacle now and all these things start to occur when you set up the scenario which is very profound. So now when we're doing it again we're going huh, actually we thought it was just this private, but actually it can be more public.

RR_ So when we call to mind the three projects that you have been working on and designing, I don't know if it's a matter of coincidence that all three are a result of the same design strategy, setting up a plate, having a kind of very strong figure of organization and structure and then distorting it again.

DA_ I think that in a way the disfiguring of the thing is very interesting to me. So it is if you track the work, if you can be bothered to sit down and look at it, it's a theme throughout the work. And this shifting system is really for me a way of making it specific. I am still very interested in this notion of specificity; I don't know why, it still grips me. For me specificity is only achieved when there's a tuning, the moment that it goes off. The frame is set and then it goes off. You know, if you look at videos of de Kooning making paintings. When he decides that it is finished he sets up the structure and he sets up the system and then there is a moment where something happens and it shifts and he rewashes the whole thing or he just glazes the whole thing. And it's this moment which is very powerful, because it sort of puts a certain tension into the project. And I think that tension, when it's driven by specific things starts to locate projects very powerfully within their context.

RR_ You see that with the management school in Moscow. We've got this organized plan on ground floor level with the big public functions and the very specific functions on top which you can't really

see when you're on the ground floor level, you just can't notice what's going on at the top. And, as you also explained, you move these buildings and then there's this one moment when they just fit. And it reminds me a little bit of the Aalto plans where there is no real specific focus but you know that they are somehow right.

DA_ And when you go to them you understand exactly. Aalto is very important, it's a good reference but I think with Aalto's buildings to study them in plan is to misunderstand them, because they look like arbitrary moments and when you go there you realize what he is absolutely targeting. He's absolutely telling you about the places that these buildings are in. Which I find very very beautiful.

RR_ Do you have specific godfathers?

DA_ Don't we all?! Too many, I love them all!

UG_ One more thing that struck me about the three projects that you were showing today is that scalelessness, denying scale in a way.

DA_ Something very interesting to me right now. I am sort of fascinated of Kibera. I don't know if you know Kibera, it's in Nairobi and it's one of the largest man made, well they would call it slums. But it's not really slums, it is an agglomeration almost a cellular agglomeration which makes a huge mat over a hill.

And it's extraordinary to me because I at this thing and went round it since I was lucky enough to be taken round it. At first I was terrified because it's almost scaleless it just goes off. But then when you enter it, it's amazing, the nuances and tuning of it that is made by human discourse and exchange. So it's this network of opportunities, moments and encounters and programming, which in the end makes a complete citadel as one phenomenon. And I was really moved by that.

UG_ So I guess that it's again blurring a boundary, the one between building and city.

DA_ Yes, exactly.

RR_ So this is a good step to ask questions about the way you are teaching. Which are, say, the very important messages you always try to give the students on their way to be trained as an architect?

DA_ Well it's kind of interesting, because teaching I've almost been doing as a kind of reflection of certain moments. But right now for instance at Princeton what I've been doing if I just talk about that immediately is, I just have a studio there on a masters course. I came in and said I wanted to teach with a very significant artist, each year a different one. I'm very interested in this notion of modern authoring, to de-author to re-author. You need to reboot it. So I said, let's teach studio as

double authors to make new authorships. So always an artist and an architect teach and then in a way there's an intense dialogue that keeps moving between assumptions, presumptions and questions all the time. What was amazing was the artists were looking and saying „Why are you doing that? Why is that relevant? Why is that important?“ It was really difficult, because as an architect, as a professional you rely on assumptions and there are certain assumptions you have to have. Otherwise it's really tough. I need some assumption! Whereas artists are like “No assumptions!” and so this discourse has been very interesting and very tough, very difficult sometimes for some students. But I think that it's something that you can only teach at master's, you know, after the beginning is done. It's been about opening it up and really investigating what it is that you do. So for me teaching is trying to get students to see what it is that they do. To look, to look further, to look a bit more.

UG_ So it's actually a really free way of exploring and approaching architecture, which stems a little bit from your professional work where you have been collaborating with artists beforehand but taking that into education. Is there an output which you could actually use for your work again?

DA_ Yes, I guess that there is an output, there's always an output somehow. I think what's been interesting is that working this way with the amazing

students that I have had the fortune of collaborating with, because in a way they're collaborators as well with the artists. Students have been able to also bring up positions within the discourse that was surprising to you. Because, in a way one sets up their own agenda with your own set of issues but ever so often there's another version of it which is off your radar, which is always really powerful when you see it, because it then manifests its own language and its own sort of morphology and that's been fascinating to see and fascinating for artists too. When you go to a crit with architects it can be really tough, you can get destroyed or you are loved. It's quite emotional. With artists it's really interesting. When you go to a review with an artist it's more like a therapy session. It's a discourse about why and what does this mean. What does this mean to you? What is this language? I was very shocked when I did some reviews in the fine arts schools. I was like “Oh, my God!” There is a very different type of confidence that comes out of artists, because in a way they're forced to encounter their subconscious much more than architects are. I think architects are forced to slightly forget their subconscious action.

RR_ Just staying in the architectural realm.

DA_ Yeah, so you're saying just do it and if you do it well it's done. Whereas when you go to a painting studio the painting is not really the discussion anymore. „Oh yeah, that's a great painting. Now let's

talk about what this is all about“.

UG_The idea of concept is still there but more holistically or more coherently.

DA_Well, it's a central thing that is driving. The product is really a sum result of where you are as a student in your life right now. It's like the sum of your knowledge, your experiences, your exposure. But in a way that can accelerate or decelerate, can't it? Depending on what you encounter. But what is critical is what is your conceptual frame.

RR_Do you actually hire students in the office?

DA_Yes, a lot of my students end up working in the office.

RR_Do you think it's important that the young really move into the office very early?

DA_I've always been in a young office so it's not really even a discussion. I just think if you can work in the way that I think is the sort of productive realm then I don't care what age you are.

UG_To go back to that, I would like to mention what you told me earlier about your experience with David Chipperfield in terms of passing on knowledge.

DA_Well, I worked for David and I worked for



Eduardo. They are very different and very generous people. David was very interesting, because in the 80's and 90's, when we worked for him as students, he was the only British architect that we knew who was connected to the European discourse. David's library was the best library in London. He knew all the European discourse. It was extraordinary. It was really interesting, because in London there was a lot of naval gazing based on the high tech. The high tech was so profoundly strong and post-modernism so strong that it was all that people referred to. Whereas David was this kind of anomaly, who was engaged in a wider discourse and he was very supportive in nurturing the interests that we had. It was through David that I went to Portugal. I became very interested in Portuguese work and he helped to facilitate connections, which then allowed me to work.

I worked a little bit for Alvaro Siza and then I moved and worked for Eduardo. Eduardo for me was a very important moment, because Eduardo does a kind of Portuguese architecture, which is apparently international but is highly specific and highly Portuguese. And you don't get it until you really go there and see it. And you realize that Eduardo is able to wrestle a modernity and specificity into one new synthesis and I loved that idea of enlightenment ideas. I call modernities enlightenment ideas, whatever you want to do. Can you harness enlightenment ideas and turn it into something useful for society? I think Eduardo does that, Alvaro Siza does that, Oscar Niemeyer did that. Kenzo Tange did that.

RR_ So when going through these schools or offices of David Chipperfield, Souto de Moura and so on you notice to a certain extent the influence on your way of working. Now that you have grown with your office in London and a branch office in Berlin and doing work in Moscow, in Ghana and in Washington and so on. How can you actually keep up this intense quality of dedicated work.

DA_ This is the million dollar question. I love architecture! It's my first love, it's really absurd actually. It's actually slightly dysfunctional, I would admit it. I just love it! I feel it's a real privilege so I do it because I love it! I mean it's true that it's a lot of pressure and I'm travelling a lot because I'm very engaged in it. But also I have now been working with

people who have been with me for 12, 10 years now. They have become my senior team. They are about seven people that I work very closely with, who have been with me for over a decade. So they have made it easier for me to do what I do. It seems like I can do more because I can work with them more. You know it's not beginnings anymore, they know where the issues are. So as we got larger and larger projects I'm able to have the support structure that I need. It's always a team, there is a team and sure I am the lead of that team but my support structure is essential for me being able to work at this scale.

UG_ What will be coming now? What could possibly be next?

DA_ I might do something very small!

UG_ Maybe?

DA_ Really, really small ... tiny.

UG_ Like a tree house?

DA_ You know it's not really about the scale. I chose Africa, because I was just appalled by the lack of information. You know what Rem did was great, but in a way it was again like one small moment and I felt that just wasn't enough. So for me I think you can analyze Lagos the way you can analyze Hong Kong when you understand Asia. Whereas I think that if

you analyze Lagos when you don't even know the continent it just becomes a freak show and I think the idea of a freak show isn't right. It's not a freak show it's nearly 2 billion people living in 54 cities. It's a whole third of the world. So it's real. It's a whole universe. So if I wanted to deal with this I wanted this to be comprehensive at least. It was a bit you know slightly falling on your own sword but when I started it I thought that I could do it in three years. I got the dates and was like yeah yeah yeah, because I would only go between meetings. I literally was at it for 10 years. If I wasn't in London then I was always documenting on the continent. And I would always go alone, I insisted on doing it alone, as a kind of space.

RR_ I also see this Lagos project of Rem quite critical especially because they have got these quite deceiving images and they just collect images of blue plastic bags and they're mapping it like that in the next show. It's as if there is a post-colonial attitude in there, which I think is not really positive.

DA_ I love Rem, so I don't want to be critical and I think what he is doing is very important, but it's very important to be sensitive to the colonial and post-colonial. It's so important, because it is a defining moment in the 20th century, which shifted half the world. You have to be very sensitive of it and if you're not I think you fall into very silly traps. Exoticisation is really the thing to be on guard against. It's just not

necessary, it's real.

RR_ So when you're rolling up the whole global rally, what is this small project you would like to design?

DA_ My favorite little project at the moment, which is just being built? I recently was asked by this very interesting guy to come fly fishing with him. I've never fly fished so I went fly fishing with boots up to here, wading in the river spent like a really long weekend fly fishing. We're making a little cabin and it's in St. Andrew's. It's actually where Prince Charles is like you know „king of the manor“ but somehow we managed to get the city to back this very crazy little thing, which is basically a place to rest and eat and warm yourself before you go out fly fishing. I'm really loving that project a lot right now and it's being built right now. But it's a very modern thing in a very old place. I mean it's a very crazy scale. It's a space for one person and nature.

UG_ Let me be a little provocative or a bit critical. You were starting to get more into public buildings and the social ideas of architecture. How does that work with running a business? Because I know that you have had some of the larger commissions to actually pay for some of the smaller ones.

DA_ The funny thing is that you do seven or eight years of studying and you never learn about business. And then you go out into the world and you

start working and you start running a business. And you have a lot of people that you are working for. I don't know, for architects it's not easy at all. You have to be very clear and very comfortable and you have to get people to help you. You know for many years I was trying to do it on my own and I now have brought in people who can help me manage that now. There's a difference between when a practice is the magical 5 or 12 people. It's actually amazing and then when it jumps to over 50, I think over 50 is when everything shifts. The business model is more pronounced when the numbers increase, you have to be more careful. But for me we are now starting to do some commercial work. We still choose projects where we can blur public agendas with commercial work deliberately. But yes, certain large works pay for certain small works and we don't take that many large works. I take certain ones and they last a certain amount of time and they allow us to do small things like fishing huts or whatever else which don't pay at all. There's no fee but it's actually a year's worth of discourse and discussion. Because you want to get it right so you invest the energy in it. You could build a tower probably with the amount of energy that you are investing in it.

RR_ So the question is actually how to go on and where to go. Where are you heading? Which projects are there since the door is open now and lots of things are possible. I also think the audience would like to continue this discussion this evening,

because we have had a really substantial body of work being shown and talked about. It was a very interesting talk, David, to have you here this evening and I think it was interesting for the audience as well, now being able to compare the different guests we had. It's time to say thank you very much for coming. It was a great pleasure to have you here and I think the audience really appreciated it a lot. I would also like to take this opportunity express my thanks to the members of my team, who have been supporting me in these discussions and who have also helped with the technology, the slides and so on. And my special thanks go to the Sto Foundation, the generous sponsor of these November Talks 2011, the first we have actually held here in Graz. You have been very supportive indeed! Thank you very much! And I would appreciate it a lot if we could host this event next year again and see everyone here in November 2012! Thanks a lot and good night!

publication discussed in the interview:
David Adjaye: African Metropolitan Architecture
Edited by Peter Allison. Rizzoli, 2011

Boštjan Vuga_Ljubljana

Boštjan Vuga graduated at the Faculty of Architecture in Ljubljana, Slovenia (1992) and continued post graduate studies at the AA School of Architecture in London (1993-1995). In 1996, together with Jurij Sadar, he founded SADAR + VUGA in Ljubljana, which became one of the most famous architectural offices in Slovenia. The office has been driven by a quest for quality and innovative architecture. Boštjan Vuga was a visiting critic amongst others at AA School of Architecture in London, at the ETH in Zurich and the Akademie für Angewandte Kunst Vienna. In September 2011, he was appointed as a visiting professor at the ADIP - architecture design innovation program at TU Berlin.

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David Adjaye_London

David Adjaye received his Master degree from the Royal College of Art in London 1993. Established in 2000, his office ADJAYE ASSOCIATES has gone on to win a number of prestigious commissions. Adjaye, who is now recognized as one of the leading architects of his generation in the UK also collaborates with important contemporary artists and curators to create unique spaces for art. He holds a visiting professor post at Princeton University School of Architecture and he has co-presented television series and hosted Radio programs for the BBC.
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The interviews have been conducted by staff members of the Institute of Architecture Technology.

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