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# URBAN NOMADS

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Since the 80s it is argued that architecture and urban design are changing, due to multiple factors. The profession reacts with interesting approaches. Nevertheless education in architecture and urban design lags behind, and seems to be captured in inflexible and static curricula.

Urban design in The Netherlands has a high level and a rich tradition. This solid foundation allows us to experiment with new education methods. Therefore Saxion University of Applied Sciences has started an urban design school, just four years ago. This school works with a new flexible educational approach: "Urban Nomads".

### DESIGN STRATEGIES INSTEAD OF MASTER PLANS

The goal of a sustainable urban development plan should be to anticipate, and respond to different developments adequately. Classic urban master plans assume an ideal end state. In practice it is almost always necessary to adapt these master plans at some point. A fixed master plan as an end result can easily lead to 'trouble areas', while designing open to future, unpredictable developments could make it possible to align quality and user needs continuously. Being able to design for flexibility and impermanence is one of the hardest - and yet most important - challenges for an urban designer. Urban Nomads aims to explore the potentials of dynamics of change, in order to get a grip on how flexible design solutions could be created: strategies for dealing with changing circumstances. "Just in time," in close cooperation with the field of activity.

### FLEXIBLE CURRICULUM: WORKSHOPS

To respond quickly to a current design task, it is crucial that the education can be adapted easily to the given circumstances and context. Therefore we developed a curriculum that contents, after a first regular year, of short and intense workshops. These workshops travel like nomads, according to partners, participants and Assignments, through the field of activity. Spontaneously, independent and aware.

### RESULTS

The students complete several workshops, and collect the results in a portfolio. The portfolio will be tested by professionals, that are

active in the field. All requested professional products have to be represented, including professional skills. The professionals determine if the student is ready to face the working field.

### EXAMPLE 1: WORKSHOP "PUBLIC PLACES IN HYBRID TERRITORIES" (2011/2012)

#### Assignment

Try to find design potentials in the transformation of harbour areas and the urban network that is related to it.

#### Participants

Urban design students of the Saxion University of Applied Sciences (The Netherlands) and architecture students of the Fernando Pessoa University in Porto (Portugal).

#### Week 1

##### (location: Amsterdam/ Rotterdam, The Netherlands)

Students analyzed on-going transformation processes in the harbour areas of Amsterdam (like Borneo Sporenburg and IJ-Oevers) and Rotterdam (like Muellerpier and Kop van Zuid). Input: excursions to these areas, lectures by the urban designers, municipalities and users of the areas, followed by an "Urban Dialogue" and discussion. After that: workshops, on a specific location in the harbour area (Quarantine Island, Rotterdam), coached by local professionals.

#### Results

Analyses, a toolbox for a design strategy.

#### Week 2

##### (location: Viana do Castelo, Portugal)

Students visited the abandoned harbour area of Viana do Castelo, to compare it to the Dutch situation, and to test the applicability of their strategies.

Input: excursions, lectures by professors of the university of Porto. After that: workshops, at the university of Porto, coached by professors of different disciplines and universities.

#### Results

Application of the developed toolbox: an urban design for Viana do Castelo.

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### EXAMPLE 2: MINI WORKSHOP AT ASCA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE (BARCELONA, 21 JUNE 2012 10:15 - 10:30)

#### Assignment

Mark on the map of Barcelona the place where you want to be if the world would end tonight.

#### Participants

All members of the ASCA International Conference CITIES: II.

#### Results

Letter addressed to the participants and map "Try Before You Die" (next page).

### SPONTANEOUS, INDEPENDENT, AWARE

The Urban Nomads workshops are highly diverse in terms of location and time. Urban Nomads cooperates with a working field that ranges from various urban design studios and different municipalities to several research institutes and universities. The current urban design assignment is always central. However, to generate depth in design our education is often on site. In our view, this approach might help student to get in touch as a future designer with mission, context and circumstances. We hope to deliver graduates who are aware of their responsibility for a sustainable quality of their environment.

