

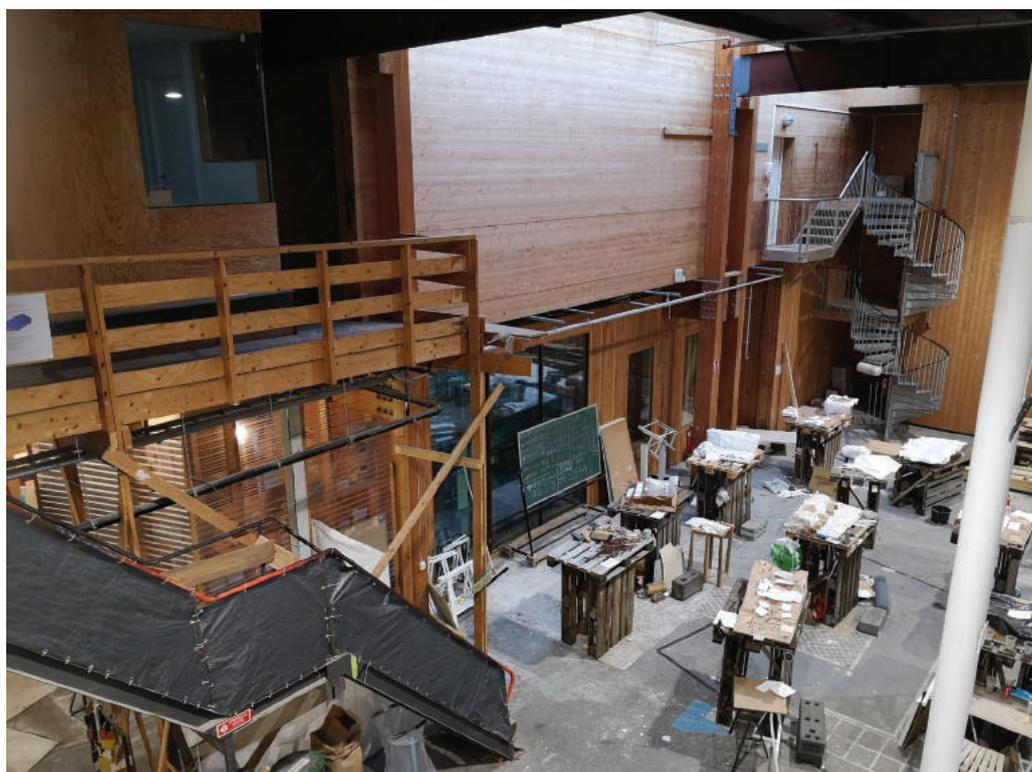
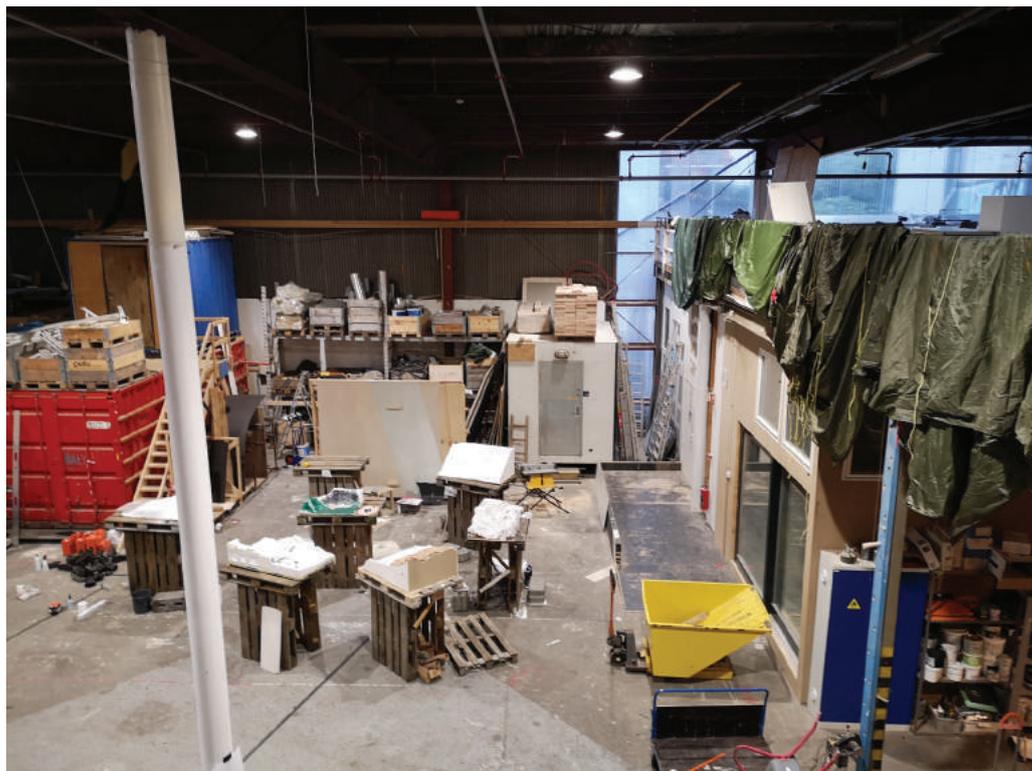
# / SITUATED ARCHITECTURE(S): / INTRAVENTIONS / IN / FLUX

Elective Master's Course  
Spring 2020-2021

Alberto Altés and Marco Casagrande

/ ONE OF THE  
/ MAIN GOALS  
/ OF THE  
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/ DESIGN AND  
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**Elective Master's Course  
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Bergen School of Architecture

# Situated Architecture(s): Intraventions in Flux

Elective Design Studio - Master's Programme

2020-2021

21-Week Master's Course

4<sup>th</sup> of January to 28<sup>th</sup> of May 2021 / 30 ECTS

Course Directors:

Alberto Altés and Marco Casagrande

Additional Teaching Team: (to be confirmed)

Jacob Schroll, Kim Kristensen, Eva Kun, Espen Folgerø, Roger Tudo (H Architectes), Claudi Aguilo (DATAE), Sergi Serrat (Granada82), Walter Unterrainer, Ingrid Berger Myhre

## 1 Introduction

The course emerges around the opportunity to collectively develop and build an architectural intervention in the hall of the school engaging both with a number of existing needs, conditions and requirements to upgrade it, and a selection of research and exploratory potentials associated with the situation.

These potentials are framed in the title of the course as a proposal to think through architecture both as a careful engagement with the specific conditions of a situation, and as a verb: an ongoing, unfolding action. The notion of 'intravention', qualitatively different from that of intervention, emphasizes just that need to inhabit a situation throughout time in order to become part of it, and a performative approach that focuses on the transformative character of practices, privileging a focus on what a thing 'does' or can do.

The course and the situation are further defined through the interplay of the following 'matters of concern', which will constitute the main core of both design and research explorations:

Movement/Situatedness

Circulation/Inhabitation

These terms highlight how the situation we are to intervene in is partially defined by a need to rethink and transform the way in which certain parts of the building and its spaces are connected and used (which could be simplified as a matter of circulation and connection) but also by the opportunity to combine that with the generation of one (or more) space(s) for inhabitation. The situation in which we are to work, learn and research together is also defined by an understanding of architecture as both situated and in motion.

The course is thus conceived as a site of exploration for students with an interest in forms of situated, engaged practice, wanting to participate in the transformation of the spaces of the school, with experience and/or motivation towards working and building with timber and full size construction projects, a willingness to think through theory and philosophy in concert with design, technology and construction, and unafraid or brave enough to engage their bodies as space-making tools.

## 2 Course Description

The course aims to explore the relations of ‘situatedness’ and ‘movement’ in architecture, while setting up productive pedagogical experiments that will emphasize embodied cognition and the particular ways in which spatial and architectural skills and knowledge develop through direct engagement in making practices.

The course has been devised as an integrated design studio, i.e. a full time, semester-long unit in which design, theory, construction technology, history, artistic exploration and other components are all integrated into a whole. It is also understood to be a research project, requiring therefore reflective attention to both the proposed themes and the design and construction processes, which are to be investigated, thought through and documented, in a form commensurate with the Master’s level of the course.

Through a combination of experimental research and making ‘modes’ (situated ways of carrying out things) the studio will engage in a collective exploration of the potentials of the situation of intervention at BAS, while simultaneously developing complementary or related knowledges and work within a series of well defined, shorter exercises, not necessarily linked linearly with the final built outcome. There will be, thus, also other ‘outcomes’ of diverse kind throughout the term.

Foregrounding both our bodies’ capacity to make space, and an ‘active’ or performative register which focuses on what architecture(s) can do, the studio will carry out experimental and site-specific explorations and tests, engaging wood as primary material, and paying especial attention to *movement and change* (understood as both conditions and materials of architecture but also in relation to our own state of constant motion), as well as to the notion of *situatedness* (understood as a kind of attention and knowledge an ‘inhabitant’ develops and carries along with its own movement through ‘life’).

We will explore the existing affordances and potentialities of the situation in the hall at BAS and the richness of the conceptual landscape that it enables, combining disciplinary hard work, creative intuitions, bodily interactions and affective engagement, and with a fundamentally open attitude, articulated in direct relation to the school’s pedagogical approach. The course will embrace *openness* as an internal quality of the process we will inhabit throughout both the design and the construction of the thing we will build, but also as a potential capacity to change/evolve of this thing itself.

We will approach design transversally and responsibly, acknowledging that any making process is also a form of thought and that thinking activity (and therefore philosophy) involves also the making of things such as for instance words or sentences. We will contend that making and thinking are always ‘already’ situated and orientated ‘somehow’ (modal emphasis) and shaped by the various affective investments in and intensities of what happens. Making/Thinking/Feeling will thus be intra-acting components of processes of learning – understood after Gibson and Maschelein as the education of attention – allowing knowledge to grow and be articulated from direct, practical and observational engagements with people and things around us, i.e., always making-with, thinking-with, feeling-with.

The course operates along two core realms of practice: firstly, that of architecture and other spatial practices with a particular emphasis on architectural design, construction technologies and material conditions; and secondly, one which recruits philosophy and theory as thinking tools that should work intimately entangled with and at a distance from making/ designing. Additionally, bodily awareness, embodied cognition, choreography and dance will afford us a temporary site of encounter to approach and explore movement and its always impossible description.

Exploring and learning, understood as the education of attention, mean to progressively develop more and more skilled abilities to detect the affordances of the environment, and the differences that make a difference. This includes approaching attention in multiple ways: as listening, as caring, as waiting, as being present, as going along, but also as Tim Ingold would have it, as ‘longing’, in the precise sense of stretching a life along a line.

Notions of love and care understood as the non-cynical, will help us bring an ethical dimension to attention, by approaching it not as a cognitive process oriented toward understanding, but as a way of restoring (things) to presence, and not in order to become aware of, but to draw us into correspondence with the world.

In that sense, the course is also interested in exploring a form of ‘more-than-human’ intimacy, which speaks of both a) our need to attend to the ecologies of other things and organisms which are alive and/or ‘vibrant’ to understand their active role in the making of the world, and b) their own closeness and intimate intra-action. This implies a modest acknowledgement of our non-central position as humans, and an understanding that we are also nature working, which questions the assumed separation of nature and culture.

We will thus design and make things with materials, particularly focusing on the affordances of timber and wood construction(s), we will read, and think through philosophy and theory, to inform our design actions but also to design with those thoughts and to make design think, and we will move to get more in touch with our bodies and with the things they are in touch with... to explore the ways in which our bodies move and are moved, and make space, and make or do things with others.

The course will explore these threads through collective and collaborative study actions and spatial experiments that will take a multiplicity of forms, understanding all of them always and simultaneously both as research and as design events.

In addition to the effects of the different components as experiences, and the overall learning outcomes listed below, the course will result in a series of documented explorations and reflections gathered in one or more reports combining text and graphic material, as well as in a fully built intervention at BAS.

### 3 Course Structure

The course will be divided into two main parts which will correspond roughly to one half of the term each, the first 11 weeks of the term and the remaining 10 weeks, respectively:

- The first part, comprising the first 11 weeks, will be organized in week-long components, starting with one week of introduction and ‘warm-up, and followed by a sequence of intense workshops, focusing on various aspects of the situation and its associated dimensions. The sequence will alternate between a focus on construction techniques and technologies (addressing one by one themes such as ‘traditional techniques’, ‘structural integrity’, and ‘energetic exchange’) and a focus on other spatial and conceptual aspects such as ‘movement’, ‘accessibility and logistics’, ‘inhabitation’, and ‘public privacy’.
- The second part, which will extend from week 12 to the end of the term in week 21, will focus on the development of a design proposal and its subsequent construction. This part will be further structured in two halves, five weeks long each, where the first half will be organized around two 1-week workshops facilitating the development of design approximations, including also time for reflection, review, sharing, exchange, and final presentations; and the second half will be dedicated to adjustments of the final proposal, executive/production work and site preparation for 2 weeks, followed by actual construction during the last 3 weeks of the term.

During the first part of the course, a series of *lectures* will introduce themes, explore and reflect on some of the proposed conceptual and spatial dimensions, and share stories and analysis of related case studies and experiences. Additionally, 3 intense *reading seminars* will provide an opportunity for close reading and discussion of relevant texts connected to the proposed core threads, primarily focusing on ‘situatedness’, ‘movement’ and ‘more-than-human intimacy’. The seminars will afford us a space and a time to think through things in-depth, deviate, slow-down, speculate, and dream, at times with precision, fuelling and inspiring design trajectories and leaps.

Additionally, a parallel ‘track’ running all throughout the term will be dedicated to *research*, documentation, and the production of the report(s), including a few guided assignments, editorial work on the report(s) and a few collective interim reviews/discussions, which will be organised and scheduled not to collide with the rest of the activities.

The main pedagogical components of the course are thus:

- **W** / Exploratory Design/Research Workshops (2-5 days each) (6-8 units)
- **S** / Intensive Reading/Discussion/Writing Seminars (1-day each) (3 units)
- **L** / Lectures (4-6 sessions of around 1 hour followed by discussion/conversation)
- **D** / Design Approximation Workshops (3-5 days each) (2 units)
- **I** / Invention (Collective, semi-improvisatory construction workshop) (3 weeks)
- **R** / Responsible/Reflective/Review or Edition

\* A detailed overview of the distribution of these components throughout the term with dates, durations and links among and across them will be made available shortly before the course starts.

## 4 Course Objectives

The course operates through a number of core threads summarized through this list of objectives:

1. to provide students with an opportunity to explore and engage in a complex design situation within the very spaces they inhabit as students, in order to a) think through some of its conceptual and spatial dimensions, b) develop and build a full scale architectural intervention, and c) explore the implications and impact of affective dimensions and values in architecture particularly in relation to care, attention and intimacy;
2. to enhance and sharpen the student's awareness and understanding of the ways in which 'bodies' play fundamental and critical roles in the exploration, making and articulation of space and architecture;
3. to support students in their development of appropriate building techniques and their critical knowledge of architecture's environmental, cultural and economic impact;
4. to sharpen and develop the student's understanding of the relationship between people, buildings, and their environment through the use of architectural transformations as variations in provision for human physical, psychological, social, and cultural need;
5. to expand the attention to and understanding of the relations of architecture with movement, life and other-than-human things and organisms, in particular with respect to a) the transformations of space and their attendant documentation/briefs, b) the potential for transforming experience within interior situations, and c) an ethics of care for matter and non-human life-forms;
- 6.1 to support students in their development of appropriate processes and techniques that apply to 'immediate' real time/space architectural interventions, and in their use of combinations of improvisatory and performative techniques with more strategic and speculative (conventional) design methods;
- 6.2 to develop the notion of architecture as 'gift', the students' professional judgement, and their ability to take the initiative and make appropriate decisions in complex and unpredictable circumstances;
7. to further develop students' conceptual and analytical skills and methods of investigation necessary to negotiate relationships between theoretical concepts and architectural design outcomes;
8. to develop the students' ability to synthesise, document and judge their creative and intellectual explorations of architectural interventions in relation to environmental context, materials, and cultural imperatives;

## 5 Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will have demonstrated:

1. knowledge of theories and practices which can influence and impact architectural design and production, and how this knowledge might be creatively used to conceptualise and make architectural work; and, an ability to navigate complex design situation not only through the articulation of disciplinary knowledge but also in relation to their attention to various affective involvements including theirs;
2. an ability to critically understand and make use of the role of bodies and movement in the making and articulation of spaces and architectures;
- 3.1 an ability to critically appraise, select, and integrate structural principles and construction techniques appropriate to the scale and complexity of a project.
- 3.2 critical knowledge of construction materials, methods, technologies and techniques and their various impacts and an understanding of their role within buildings as relational objects;
4. an ability to select, develop, and critically evaluate spatial, aesthetic, technical, and social principles in the development of a proposal;
5. critical knowledge of theories of movement as well as of 'new materialist' perspectives and their potential impact on architecture's relation to the ecologies of 'matter', materials and other non-human life forms;
- 6.1 the critical ability to implement rigorous and clearly delineated design strategies, and combine performative, strategic, and speculative methods in the realisation of architectural interventions;
- 6.2 the ability to enact architectural interventions as gifts in complex relations to their contingent contexts;
7. the ability to critically and creatively mobilise and articulate theories and concepts in/ through design explorations and practices, as well as to make designs 'think'.
8. a critical ability to assess architectural interventions in terms of their effects over time, and an understanding of the performative power of documentation;

\* These 'learning outcomes' are devised in correlation to the corresponding course objectives presented in the previous section of this document.

## 6 Reflection on a number of key relevant aspects of the course

### Immediate/Delay

The course encourages and empowers participants to engage as designers and builders in an immediate situation they are already somehow part of, offering them an opportunity to encounter, articulate and rehearse alternative design modes, construction techniques and thinking modes, combining disciplinary knowledges and practices with theory, philosophy, affective dimensions and dreams.

### Body/Apparatus

The role of our bodies in the making of space is emphasized, drawing attention to the specific ways in which building and doing things with others in motion informs specific ways of learning and specific ways of designing. Embodied learning is explored and reflected upon in ways that can contribute to the development of innovative situated practices.

### Experience/Technology

This foregrounding of bodies and embodied cognition is not driven by or enacted through a rejection of science or technology, but precisely through a serious engagement with construction technology and expertise which empowers participants to get close to their experiences along materials and ways of arranging them in order to enable specific architectural, spatial and environmental/atmospheric performance.

### Care/Intimacy

The course shifts the focus towards affective dimensions both in relation to site-making and situatedness, and in relation to design processes and modes. This shift helps us interrogate issues of authorship and ownership in design practices, emphasizing their collective dimension, and can contribute to encouraging more responsible and engaged forms of practice.

### Diffraction/Representation

By questioning and temporarily deactivating the power of orthographic drawing in particular and of drawing in general in relation to design processes, the course facilitates the development and rehearsal of alternative design modes which foreground bodies, materials, movement and interdependence in situations of real-time collective exploration, design, improvisation and construction.

### Intravention/In-Flux

Finally, the course explores the potential of non-linear design processes, by partially disconnecting initial design exercises and subsequent steps in the course from what is normally understood as 'final results', or 'the project'. Instead, various design exercises focus on partial perspective and situated knowledges, providing in each case so-called 'final-results' in the sense of equipping participants for what is to come next. The built intervention, even if it occupies the core of the course, cannot be conceived as the final result, or 'the project', and should be added instead as a collective experience of another kind to the rest of pedagogical situations comprising the course. The ongoing, parallel research track, as well as various moments of collective reflection throughout the term, take the place of what is normally seen as mid-term and final reviews or crits, and introduce drawings more as a writing mode to give account of what has happened retrospectively than as projective speculation.

In the end, participants are not required to present and defend their design proposals in so-called 'crits' or reviews, but are invited instead to develop short performances in groups to be staged on the very structures/architecture(s) that will be built, enabling the sharing of affects, intensities and a different kind of *architectural thinking in motion*.

## 7 Course Dynamics

The course is conceived to encourage collaborative group work without limiting the individual creative, intellectual and affective capacities of any participants. The class is to be divided in smaller groups, which will be asked to work together in the development of the various course tasks. These groups will not be necessarily the same throughout the course. For some tasks and particularly for the construction workshop, the class might reshuffle into slightly larger groups, and there will be moments and activities in which the whole class will act together or in big groups. It is important to consider this collective dimension of the course in each of the steps and to invest in the development of ways of working together that might require non-conventional practices or set-ups.

The course does not proceed in a linear trajectory from analysis to design, and there will be no individual 'final' design outcomes understood in conventional ways. Nevertheless, it is a design studio, and students will be given the opportunity and required to develop 'partial' or 'minor' design exercises individually or in groups of various sizes. We will refer to these series of smaller design operations as a 'landscape of actions', and we will encourage the articulation of diverse trajectories and readings across them. These actions, their articulation and readings, as well as the various outcomes of the course and the construction workshop, will be collected and edited along more reflective components in the research report that we will collectively produce.

The exploratory design exercises proposed for the initial period are thus to be carried out in groups and there will be separate detailed sets of instructions and working materials for each of them. In general, the course proceeds based on the rhythms set by the 'score' this syllabus constitutes, with more precise instructions unfolding progressively for each of the specific subparts and activities. Students will have to 'respond' to the diverse assignments through group work, mapping, drawing, reflective readings, engaged oral discussions, writing, bodily engagement, and attentive listening.

Assessment and evaluation is based primarily on engaged participation throughout the course in all of its components and stages.



Bergen Arkitektthøgskole  
Bergen School of Architecture

## 8 Team description

### *Course Directors/Main Teachers:*

Alberto Altés and Marco Casagrande

### *Additional Teaching Team (confirmed):*

Espen Folgerø, Architect, BAS

Kim Kristensen, Structural Engineer, BAS

Eva Kun, Artist, Associate Professor DAV, BAS

Jacob Schroll, Architect, Timber Expert (Bergen)

### *Other potential members of the team to be confirmed:*

Roger Tudo, Architect, (H Architectes), (<http://www.harquitectes.com/info/en/team-harquitectes/>)

Claudi Aguilo, Architect, (DATAE), (<http://www.dataae.com/en/equip>)

Sergi Serrat, Architect, (Granada82), (<http://granada82.com/>)

Walter Unterrainer, Architect, Professor (Chalmers School of Architecture)

Ingrid Berger Myhre, Choreographer (Bergen)

### *Guest Reviewers:*

Oren Lieberman, Architect, Professor, Head of Portsmouth School of Architecture (Portsmouth, UK)

Per Nilsson, Philosopher, Associate Professor, Art Academy Umeå (Umeå, Sweden)

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Flipping Sauna, 2013, Sandhornoya, Norway (Alberto Altés with Sami Rintala, Joar Nango, Roger Mullin and Håvard Arnhoff)