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PRILAGAJANJE PROJEKTU IN PRILAGAJANJE PROJEKTA ADAPT-R -  
'ARCHITECTURE, DESIGN AND ART PRACTICE TRAINING-RESEARCH'

ADAPTING TO AND ADAPTED BY ADAPT-R - ARCHITECTURE, DESIGN AND ART  
PRACTICE TRAINING-RESEARCH

**izvleček**

Arhitekturne šole se zadnje čase vse bolj posvečajo svojim raziskovalnim prizadevanjem. Posebna pozornost velja raziskovanju skozi oblikovanje, pa tudi raziskovalnim projektom, pri katerih imajo izkušnje in znanje iz kreativne umetniške prakse ključno metodološko vlogo.

Pričujoči članek predstavlja projekt ADAPT-r – 'Architecture, Design, Arts Practice training Research'. Omenjeni projekt financira Evropska skupnost v 7. okvirnem programu. Projektni partnerji skupaj s kreativnimi praksami arhitekture, oblikovanja in drugih umetnosti spodbujajo in raziskujejo možnosti raziskovanja umetniške prakse: iz prakse in skozi prakso – za prakso. V članku poročamo o vzpostavitvi raziskovalno-izobraževalne mreže in o prvih rezultatih raziskovanja, z željo po prispevku k aktualni raziskovalni diskusiji in k metodološkemu razvoju.

**ključne besede**

raziskovanje prakse, raziskovanje v procesu oblikovanja

**abstract**

*Recently Schools of Architecture have started paying much more attention to their research endeavors. Especially research by design is high on the agenda as well as research projects where experience and knowledge from creative practice plays a key role as a research method.*

*This paper introduces the ADAPT-r project. The project acronym stands for Architecture, Design, Arts Practice training Research. ADAPT-r is funded under the 7th Framework of Research of the European Commission. The project partners stimulate and explore the potential of creative practice research. This paper reports on its setting and first experiences and results and tries to contribute to an ongoing debate and framing of the development.*

**key words**

practice research, research through design

**The ADAPT-r project**

The University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Architecture is part of a vivid 7 partner consortium of creative practice research training developers. The ADAPT-r (Architecture, Design and Art Practice Training-research) project is lead by the KU Leuven, Faculty of Architecture and strongly influenced by RMIT Europe (Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Spain). The project further includes the Aarhus School of Architecture, the University of Westminster, the Estonian Academy of Arts, Faculty of Architecture and the Glasgow School of Art. The up-grade of the joint actions which took place since 2009 is a project within the EU 7th Framework of Research, more specifically the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, ITN program, entitled ADAPT-r. As stated "officially" at the project website [ADAPT-r, 2014] it aims to significantly increase European research capacity through a unique and ground-breaking research model. At its core is the development of a robust and sustainable initial training network in an emergent Supra-Disciplinary field of research across a range of design and arts disciplines – creative practice research. The essence of the program is not just the development of the training model, but also the training of new researchers themselves - both at the PhD, the postdoc as well as the supervisor level. The training includes each of these

levels of training in order to seriously increase the capacity to support the research on and through the venturesome practices of the project fellows. The professional institutional context of the project is enabled through a strong partnership network and embeds the research projects in SMEs (architectural practices, art and design offices, etc.) as a "substantial opportunity for real-world testing of the research and real-world training". This usually lacks in more traditional research settings. "The research that is produced through the ADAPT-r ITN will contribute to a wider research effort to increase knowledge, understanding and quality of research in practice based creative disciplines and its methods." The ADAPT-r ITN will establish a deeper understanding of research in creative fields through funding 40 PhD Fellowships, 8 training conferences, two major research conference, a major exhibition, five key books, and a website providing public access to research and events. [ADAPT-r, 2014] Thus a new generation of (not just reflective) practitioners is introduced to the methods of creative practice research. As such the ADAPT-r project (with the support of the European Commission) materializes and deepens a movement in architectural research where schools of Architecture show a growing interest in connecting their research to designing, design studio work and/or practice [EAAE, 2014]. Where in

most school of Architecture, there are only a limited number of PhDs ongoing in this direction, the ADAPT-r project creates a pool of 600 research months to reach the abovementioned goals, hence being one of the major endeavors in architectural research of the last years.

### Creative Practice Research

The answer to the question of what exactly to research in a creative practice research project is simple: it is the inquiry into the "medium itself" [Van Schaik and Johnson, 2011; Blythe and van Schaik, 2013]. How to start? Taking all the "four main disciplinary approaches within architecture (building science, social science, humanities and art/design)" into account [Rendell, 2004] brings the opportunity of bringing them together through designing. What happens when it is done "by design"? [Verbeke, 2013]. And what happens then in the case of purified formalistic endeavours?

Design research is more than taking care of repeatability (as known in science), transparency (humanities), theory testing and/or building (from social sciences): rigor, consistency and diligence need to be upgraded by imagination and also speculation. Borrowing from other disciplines requires the creative process to become the focus of the research [Fraser, 2013], and this leads to the development of immanent methods of the process itself. Fraser also argues that "we need to view design research as something distinct from Schön's "reflective practitioner" [Schön, 1983], not least because the latter does not fully take into account the vital processes of knowledge creation in architecture. The two questions Fraser points out are more than relevant: "Is design research in architecture something that is already inherent in the design practice, and simply needs to be identified and articulated in the public realm? Or is it something that still needs to be created anew, as a kind of step-change in the way in which architects/academics conceive of and produce their designs?" We can add: (How) is it possible, that the awareness and the development of the ability to explicate the "tacit knowledge"[Polanyi, 1966] inherent within the design process triggers other modes of new knowledge creation (... not "production"!...)? Following Glanville it is indeed important to enlarge our understanding of research to include not only the

way of knowing in the exact sciences, but to also include specific knowledge based on our experiences (artistic, aesthetic, social, etc) [Glanville 2012]. How can we, in architecture, learn from other art and design disciplines? Some of the answers and also new questions are potentially deriving within the ADAPT-r project framework through establishing a large community of research practice.

In order to structurally include peer-reviewing of the research, ADAPT-r PhD fellows present twice a year during a Practice Research Symposium (PRS, see figure 1). The fellows present their work for half an hour and it is then discussed by an international panel. This substantially contributes to the quality of the research outcomes.

To consolidate the findings of the first year, the ADAPT-r project organized the 1st Creative Practice Research Conference in Brussels, August 2014 [Verbeke et al., 2014a and 2014b]. In line of the vision to organize research in the medium and through designing, the conference hosted plenty of exhibition presentations (see figure 2). Design studios were cleared and cleaned in order to host exhibitions, carefully reviewed and selected. Presentations took place within the exhibition spaces. In fact, instead of presenting images or representations of objects/designs during the presentations of the research, the participants could show and refer to objects present in the exhibition space. The conference can be seen as one of the first fully peer-reviewed conferences which facilitate the communication of research findings through exhibition possibilities.

### Structural relevance

The ADAPT-r project as seen from the institutional perspectives of the partners is the opportunity for:

- Tracing the elements and the nature of practice based research in the integrated/hybrid tradition developed at each faculty
- Clarification and potential redefinition of the distinctions between practice based, practice oriented, research by/through design.
- Identification of the challenges of introducing and transforming the ADAPT-r approach as a "model" within each university.



Slika 1: Simpozij v prakso usmerjenega raziskovanja (foto: Hanne Van Den Biesen)  
Figure 1: Practice Research Symposium setting (photo: Hanne Van Den Biesen)



Slika 2: Predstavitev raziskovanja ob razstavi (foto: T.Z.)  
Figure 2: Exhibition presentation setting (photo: T.Z.)

Learning from the experience of other partners means checking both the openness of your own existing PhD program [like in the case of Ljubljana, Zupančič, 2009, 2012+ and the openness of the minds of the representatives of all the partner institutions. This indicates the fragile balance of a "model" as an identifiable stream in relation to the need of its own openness and transformability. Communication, openness, being rigorous, a focus on learning are key academic qualities to establish another level of collaboration through double or joint PhD degrees.

In other words: at the current stage of the project development we believe the "model" needs to be open for transformation (as each model or method should be), which is limited to the boundaries where it can still be identified, representing an identifiable research group. For some institutions it is a dominant paradigm already, for others it is a potential model. Last but not least it can also become just an option, as a model-reference, discussion interface, a research community potential, one of challenging opportunity which can weaken its potential in the case of simple "copy-pasting" the model as it is. This option can be followed by an individual PhD student as a whole or partially – depending on the maturity of his/her practice, the nature of their practice and the problems they face within their practice.

### **Conclusions**

From the above discussion it will be clear that creative practice research is approved on the international level and the ADAPT-r consortium has created a huge lively community of practice in order to better understand the underlying principles and methods.

PRSs turn out to be a great opportunity for peer-reviewing PhD research and the 1st Creative Practice Conference facilitated presentation in line of the primary way of communication in the field of architecture, art and design: through exhibitions in the medium of the discipline.

It is claimed creative practice research should at least be an option in the post-graduate programme in each school of architecture.

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