

Place-Based Acupuncture: Cultivating Inter- and Transdisciplinary Collaboration Through Immersive Experience in Interstitial Spaces of Rotterdam, the Netherlands

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Place-Based Acupuncture: Cultivating Inter- and Transdisciplinary Collaboration Through Immersive Experience in Interstitial Spaces of Rotterdam, the Netherlands

M. Veras Morais & S. Wit

11:00 am - 12:30 pm

Abstract

Amid growing urban challenges, designers must navigate the interplay of social, ecological, and spatial systems. Spatial design pedagogy can address this need by fostering hands-on, real-world experiences that encourage collaboration, critical and creative thinking, and a deep appreciation for the existing values of a site. This contribution reflects on two teaching experiences within TU Delft's Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment, focusing on interstitial spaces in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. The course On Site: Landscape Architectonic Explorations engages master's students from Landscape Architecture, Urbanism, and Architecture, emphasising interdisciplinary collaboration to develop inventive analyses through immersive experiences and a design proposal using minimal interventions. In 2023, students examined Land van Chabot, a fragmented polder landscape once immortalised by painter Henk Chabot (1894–1949), now redefined by an emerging motorway, the recreational corridor of the river Rotte, and the suburbs. In 2024, they focused on Stadspark-West, a network of programmed and leftover green spaces interwoven with dense urban infrastructure. Both experiences prioritised immersive fieldwork and direct stakeholder engagement with local associations, the municipality, and human and non-human residents, users, and passers-by. While addressing the sites' dissonant challenges, students uncovered their tangible and intangible qualities. Ephemeral interventions exposed the audience to the existing qualities and potential futures of the site, showcasing the students' site interpretations and design proposals, but most importantly providing a vehicle to experience the site. This approach demonstrates the transformative potential of reframing urban fringes as laboratories for experimentation, from which meaningful places can emerge.

Biography

Monica Veras Morais, Ir., is a PhD candidate in Landscape Architecture at TU Delft, NL. Trained as an Architect and Urbanist in Brazil, she holds master's degrees in Landscape Architecture (TU Delft, 2020) and Civil Engineering (UFC, 2014). With professional experience in housing and public space design, she transitioned to academia in 2014, focusing on teaching and research. Her current work explores interdisciplinary terrain between landscape architecture and management to investigate how social processes shape shared residential gardens and how these insights can inform design practice.

Saskia I. de Wit, MSc, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the section of Landscape Architecture at TU Delft, the director of the landscape architecture design office Saskia de Wit Garden and Landscape, and an editor of the SPOOL journal for design in architecture and the built environment. Her research is anchored in the garden as a core concept of the discipline of landscape architecture. This conceptual lens informs her design practice, research, and education, revolving around concepts of site-specificity, the sensory perception of place, urban landscape, residual spaces, and urban forestry.