The studio, its themes and the proposed brief are inextricably entwined. The education of architecture cannot be separated from the process of designing the architecture of education. It is through these reciprocal relationships that there is an opportunity to challenge not just the pedagogical process, but also the practice of architecture. These relationships are myriad and non-linear, which means that the input is not directly proportional to its output. This also applies to education, in that the input of information is not equal to the output of the production of knowledge. The non-linear nature of learning enforces the anti-structuralist approach of the studio, we should not and can not reduce the role of the university to a set of single properties, such as that of a validation process, a place to get coffee and socialise or a table to work at. Instead we must consider the multiple and contingent relationships between these properties and parts which make up the whole. This requires the process and outcome of education and architecture to escape the thresholds of the campus. The approach of the studio converged with the continuous nature of my research which helped define my design process and its eventual outcome.

I think that it is very difficult to separate the act of research from the process of design. Both of these things happen continuously and concurrently. My research was conducted through a series of workshops, organised outside of the boundaries of the university. The workshops looked at how to think about our existing condition, how to educate and how to practice. Through these workshops I was able to do research the education of architecture through a pedagogical process, in this way the problem became the process. Which went on to form the basis of how I thought about my project. I believe that through my approach to thinking about education and architecture I have been able to validate my design proposal with a school of architecture that is fully entangled with the environment.

However, one of the issues of doing research in this way, outside of the university was that it was also happening outside of the university timetable (the final workshop will be
taking place in May, after I have graduated). This ongoing work meant that I was slow to materialise the project and move past a simple spatial organisation of the project into how it would be built, feel and be experienced. This was not helped by the knock on or domino effect of any changes to the structural system. With the layering up of the building, through a series of different systems, each change had to be followed through from bottom to top, to ensure that it would function. This was time consuming and often not done in conjunction with thinking through the materialisation of the project. In this respect I might have been too linear in exploring the experiential possibilities of my building. So although this graduation has been a long and sometimes slow process, I believe that this could be considered to be somewhat in-keeping with my approach to the project and the subject of my research.

The relationship between the project and its wider social context, or a school of architecture and its environment are contingent, pressures and affordances are continuously produced. This requires us to examine and evaluate the efficacy of the systems in use. Educational institutions much like architecture tend to be slow moving and many of the existing practices of the current education system continue to depend on properties such as mass production and the high concentration of people, which emerged during the industrial revolution. It is exactly this relationship between the learner, the institution and the environment (architecture) that I have attempted to entangle through my proposal. Architecture is a discipline that is built through know how and the importance of the local and specific. Buildings do not only embody norms but enforce them. It is in this way that the specific condition of the educational mode can act as a tool or catalyst, the local becomes a starting point for the development of knowledge, from which more information and knowledge can be understood. This heuristic and self directed mode of learning can be encouraged through transience in both space and time, that is movement and duration. These are two conditions which force you to think as process, continuously. As Bergson put it, “*There do not exist things made, but only things in the making, not states that remain fixed, but only states in a process of change*”. Educational space can only be identified retroactively as a singularity, a point where and when knowledge was produced, whilst the learner is defined by their trajectory. This makes it difficult to say whether the approach did or did not work, but I do believe that the very fact that the research and workshops are ongoing and have extended beyond the university has validated my learning experience.
Low Density Objects

*Low Density Objects* will attempt to take account of the large scale infrastructural and productive objects that are uniquely visible to us in areas of low urban density or what we have formally called rural or remote areas. It proposes a week-long research and theory exchange to excavate the speculative opportunities available to us to reconfigure the field of architecture from the perspective of an area "more volatile than the most accelerated city".

Nearly twenty years ago in his article *Bigness*, Rem Koolhaas reiterated the extent to which architecture is no longer thinkable in terms of objectives, programs and design, and must be understood as an object capable of its own unplanned generative creativity. He equally undermined the figure of the architect as a lone, heroic guarantor of the building’s meaning and authenticity, and ushered in *after-architecture*.

Now the question of architecture in the anthropocene brings these questions into new light as we grapple with the emergent meaningless power of *Large-Scale*, and the impotency with which we attempt to maintain a stable relationship with it in which "urbanism generates potential and architecture exploits it." In his text, Koolhass states that Bigness is "incapable of establishing relationships," it is ultimately withdrawn and unavailable to its constitutive parts.

This quality of architecture to refuse the humanist, anthropocentric conception we have of it now offers a different field of possibility for thinking the environment and our participation or annihilation in its unpredictable evolution. *Low Density Objects*, is the first stage towards applying the speculative philosophies that have uncoupled modern thinking from the inevitably of being locked into the purview of a limited, human perspective. The ability for thought to think beyond the limits of human experience and break the "correlationist circle" means that while eschewing the dichotomies of urban - rural, and nature - culture, it becomes possible to see the landscape of vast entities that contribute to our current ecological situation.

1 Koolhaas statement on Countryside exhibited at ‘Progress’
2 “Bigness or the problem of Large”, in S,M,L,XL, OMA, (with Bruce Mau), The Monicelli Press, New York, 1995
3 Ibid Bigness
Architecture in the Anthropocene
Within Practice

Call for participation
Five day workgroup
18th – 22rd November, Rotterdam

The ubiquity of global urbanisation as an indefinitely extendable and seamless envelope is increasingly being contradicted by a number of phenomena that, through geological, social and political layers, profoundly challenge the position, role and practice of architecture.

Conceived as a series of workshops and collective processes of thought-in-practice, this second workshop examining architecture in the anthropocene proposes to focus on a variety of unconventional architectural propositions that challenge the dominant logics of accumulation and densification. Far from considering that these propositions can merely be seen in the terms of opposition, this workshop series suggests that they produce encounters that play out through an increasingly complex dynamic field. This field is inherently interconnected and no longer allows for the extrinsic relation that design used to have to its chosen problems.

These encounters generate essential questions for thinking architecture’s relation with the hyper-interconnected and highly contingent era that the concept of the anthropocene defines. The anthropocene defines a time made distinct through the significant impact that human activities are having on geological strata. What becomes apparent passing through the threshold of the anthropocene is the difficulty of navigating the increasingly complex landscapes we find ourselves confronted with. Former critical assertions are seeing their grounds vanishing and while this affects Reason and epistemological constructions in ways that may extend well beyond previous critical stances, it notably transforms the position, role, and reality of architecture and design in the larger sense.

However, it is clear that propositions within the architectural field are also propositions for accommodating different subjectivities and their communal interactions, while increasingly expanding beyond this reality. We no longer stand outside the ‘design problem’ and with this an opportunity arises to reconfigure architectural practice in relation to the rapid changes that are marking the contemporary moment.
The anthropocene indexes unfamiliar territories and this ungrounding space will give the workgroup its starting point. The hyper-scaled, volatile, high-velocity world that conventional discourses calibrated to the human have not fully apprehended, will be examined in order to propose tools and techniques for occupation and action beyond architecture’s traditionally defined relationships to space.

The group will shape practical possibilities for acting in the architectural field which will inevitably bring us to reconsider the very nature/inhabitation of lived experience in relation to an endless nexus of social, political and abstracting-global influences that participate in the construction of this very experience. Thinking through collectivity, trans- and post-human critique, as well as examining intuition, work and mechanical/object encounters within an emerging site, the work group will develop practical propositions within a theoretical framework for what it means to build in the anthropocene.

The workgroup is open to a wide range of disciplines that cross with the stated arena of interest, from architecture and geography to anthropology, philosophy, arts, and politics. Please apply by sending a short description of your interest in the project to Sam Basu at info@treignacprojet.org.

Contact Sam Basu for any questions and further details. More information is available at lowdensityobjects.org.

Architecture in the Anthropocene series is a project developed and organised by Jeremy Lecomte, Joseph Bedford, Renske Maria van Dam, Kelwin Palmer & Sam Basu.

Treignac Projet association, Hosted by
2 rue Ignace Dumergue
Treignac 19260 Wolphaertstraat 23c-25c
France 3082 BK Rotterdam

Many thanks to Maziar Afrassiabi, Joshua Thies and team at Wolfart Projectspace/LAAT

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