My design of a small school of architecture and research into architecture students’ workspaces went parallel. However, almost the entire first half of the project went up on shaping and doing the research, with just a little bit of actual designing. With no real input from the research yet to inform the design, my design dabbles at this time were focused on the position of the project in the city and conceptual schemes of how to organize workspaces, auxiliary spaces and circulation. A real design came very slowly, due to the time needed to gather data and reach conclusions from the research. The research which ended up really big, consumed time and energy, leaving less for the actual design. This is also why I took a little bit of extra time to complete the project. The results of the research however were very good and useful, for informing the design, on the workspace level, when I finally had them. For example the issue of privacy: regulating the access of oneself to others and the access to others, visually, acoustically, spatially etc. showed to be very important, and useful in guiding the design. Still, the input from the research did not automatically answer every design question or generated a complete building design. I still had my work cut out for me.

For the design, within the sort of conceptual framework I developed earlier, I worked from the interior (the workspaces, with the input from my research) to the exterior (the facades: inside to outside. From small (the individual studio) to large (the school) and then again to the small (the details). All the while I have had lots of doubts, and have been frequently second guessing myself, coming back on my decisions, and needing much time to accept solutions. Especially construction wise it has been a difficult project, but not because it was a crazy design. On the contrary, but I had trouble to find a pleasing solution in harmony with the design. Changing my mind on this part made refinement and progress of the design difficult. The facade also went through a myriad of possible designs, trying to meet sometimes conflicting needs, balancing sustainability, comfort, day lighting, views and aesthetics. Often, I have wanted to do too much: too many ideas for the facade, or the plan and I was insecure. In the process I sometimes forgot beauty, in my search for solutions. The result was clutter, or a collection of displeasing solutions. Ultimately, I have aimed for simplicity, trying to pare things down. Essentially stripping the design of the unnecessary, to its ‘good’ bones.

Looking at the project, research and design, from a wider social context then I feel that it is meaningful contribution to the current limited understanding of workspaces for architecture students. Right now there is also some interest in the topic: for instance online magazine World Architects just this August dedicated an article ‘Spaces for Learning’ to architecture studios all over the world to kick off the new school year. Unfortunately, it did not go beyond a simple list of pictures with short descriptions. There is no discussion or comparison of the different spaces and institutions which I believe is a missed opportunity. Much of the research and material in this area could benefit from more depth. My graduation project could possibly be a stepping stone for further research and can maybe start the discussion on what constitutes a good architecture studio workspace and how to improve existing ones.