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# TRAVEL, SPACE, ARCHITECTURE

edited by Jilly Traganou & Miodrag Mitrašinović

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# Mobility and Immobility in the New Architecture Practice:

*A Conversation with Hiromi Hosoya and Markus Schaefer*

Jilly Traganou

Hosoya Schaefer Architects was founded in Zurich in 2003 and focuses on architecture, strategy and research. Its two principals, Japanese-born Hiromi Hosoya and Swiss-born Markus Schaefer, met during their studies at the Graduate School of Design (GSD) at Harvard University, where they were among the authors of the *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping* (CHUNG 2001). After completing her degree in 1998, Hosoya returned to Japan to work for architect Toyo Ito and was sent as a project architect to the Netherlands, where she set up and became director of Toyo Ito Europe in Rotterdam (2002–03). From 1999 to 2003, Schaefer worked for the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), and in 2002–03 he was the director of the firm's research department AMO.

Although Hosoya Schaefer's studio is in Zurich, most of the partners' work and teaching takes place at sites away from their office base. Schaefer, for instance, taught two studios at the Berlage Institute in Rotterdam from 2004 to 2006, while Hosoya taught at Cornell University in the fall semesters of 2005 and 2006, and both taught at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Vienna in the summer of 2007. Similarly, most of the firm's commissions are at various locations throughout Europe.<sup>1</sup> For these projects they collaborate with an international network of professionals with offices far from their own. For their AnAn project in Wolfsburg, Germany,<sup>2</sup> for example, Hosoya Schaefer collaborated with the Copenhagen-based media company Shiftcontrol, the Bern-based graphic design studio Buro Destruct, and a range of young Japanese graphic and media designers.

As a result of these circumstances, physical mobility is crucial to the firm's practice – for teaching, meeting with clients and collaborators and overseeing projects – and as a condition, it is far from an exception for architects of Hosoya and Schaefer's generation. Increasing numbers of architects today not only study in countries other

- 1 Current commissions include the design of an office building and the new Rinascente department store in Santa Giulia, near Milan, Italy (master plan by Norman Foster), and *Cities in Motion* a documentary film to be produced by Condor Communications (2007–08). Among the firm's recently completed projects are AnAn (WOLFSBURG 2007), a noodle bar for Autostadt Germany, the theme park and communications platform of the Volkswagen Group, and Mobiglobe (2005–06), a media exhibition for Autostadt. In 2008, the firm won the first prize in a competition for the design of a private airport for the company Engadin Airport AG in St Moritz-Samedan, Switzerland.
- 2 Hosoya Schaefer won the Special Award 'New Generation' at the Contractworld Awards 2008 for this project.



12.1 Statistical globe developed for the Mobiglobe installation at Autostadt, Wolfsburg. © Hosoya Schaefer Architects, 2006.

than their native one but, as members of transnational architectural networks through which they acquire and maintain their recognition, find themselves perpetually on the move. These new circumstances – frequent mobility and distance from the home office – have produced a significant change in the way architecture practices operate today, especially in comparison with the relative stability, or smaller geographical radius of work, that characterized most offices until the recent past.

In a practice like Hosoya Schaefer's we find certain characteristics intersecting: the partners' graduate studies at the GSD, a school that, in addition to maintaining educational excellence, is regarded as an avenue to global success and networking; tenure in elite architectural practices of international stature prior to establishing an independent studio; and a transnational working process that expands the firm's realm of operation to places beyond its base studio in Zurich. These conditions are all important for sustaining a mobile practice like theirs. At the same time, Hosoya and Schae-

fer's personal trajectories and backgrounds in fields other than architecture (Hosoya studied English literature and Schaefer neurobiology)<sup>3</sup> qualify them to question the conventional role of the architecture office and the disciplinary boundaries of architecture. It is no coincidence, therefore, that their practice includes design for new media installations and virtual environments as well as research and consulting. Among their projects, it is particularly noteworthy that some focus precisely on the very notion of mobility, such as Mobiglobe (FIGURE 12.1), a research project and interactive media installation on global automotive mobility exhibited at the Autostadt (a subsidiary of Volkswagen) in Wolfsburg, Germany (2006), and *Cities in Motion*, a documentary film on mobility.<sup>4</sup> With Mobiglobe, Hosoya Schaefer presented a cartography of the condition of mobility in the contemporary world, claiming the need to reinvent automobile transportation through 'new efficiencies, multi-modal transport systems, energy sources, behaviors, and cultural values, especially when faced with the huge potential demands in emergent economic powers like China and India.'<sup>5</sup>

The aim of the following conversation is to explore the ways in which the increasing mobility that characterizes life in a globalized world affects the work of contemporary architects. We begin by exploring the importance of travel to architects' careers today, and arrive full circle to question this certainty in light of broader conditions ranging from communication problems that arise because of distance to global environmental concerns.

## FOREIGN ARCHITECTS AS CATALYSTS

**TRAGANOU:** Your practice is particularly intriguing to me in the context of this book because you belong to the generation of architects who are in continuous transit, and because it seems that mobility as a subject is integral to your work. Hiromi, in your lecture at the Japan Society in 2006,<sup>6</sup> you pointed out the cultural differences in the ways in which the architecture and building industries operate in Japan and the Netherlands. What has been your way to negotiate such differences as an architect, away from home, in the Netherlands?

**HOSOYA:** Let me first briefly explain the background. After I received my graduate degree from Harvard University, I decided to go back to Japan to work with Toyo Ito. It turned out that all the projects I became involved in Toyo Ito's office were in Europe. More specifically, I worked on two projects in the Netherlands. One project was an office building in Amsterdam (MAHLER 4-BLOCK 5, 2005), and the other was a housing project in Groningen (BLUE MOON UURWERKERSGANG, 2005), in which the building was finally transformed into a hotel. I found people in the

3 Hosoya received a BA in Architecture from the Rhode Island School of Design, in the United States, and a BA in English literature from Doshisha Women's University in Kyoto, Japan. Schaefer holds a Master of Science degree (Dipl. Zool.) from the University of Zürich, Switzerland.

4 *Cities in Motion* (commissioned in 2006) is co-authored by Chris Reuter and Markus Schaefer and produced by Condor Communications and Interscience Film/Gero von Boehm.

5 From the website of Hosoya Schaefer Architects, <http://www.hosoyaschaefer.com/mg.htm>. Accessed on 2 May 2008.

6 Japan Now: Country Positions in Architecture, co-sponsored by the Japan Society and the College of Architecture, Art and Planning at Cornell University, took place at the Japan Society, New York, on 1 November 2006. Other speakers were Momoyo Kajjima (Atelier Bow-Wow), Mitsuhiro Kanada (AFUP) and Taira Nishizawa (Taira Nishizawa Architects) with keynote speaker Toyo Ito (Toyo Ito & Associates, Architects).

7 The figure of the 'moon princess' derives from the Tale of the Bamboo Cutter (Taketori Monogatari) a tenth-century Japanese folktale, which is also known as The Tale of Princess Kaguya (Kaguya-hime no Monogatari). It is the story of a girl discovered as a baby inside the stalk of a glowing bamboo plant. She grows to be a woman of extraordinary beauty and is asked to marry the Emperor of Japan. To the sadness of all, a heavenly entourage comes to take her back to the Capital of the Moon (Tsukino Miyako), where she came from.

Netherlands to be very enthusiastic and open to new architectural ideas, but also to be interested in achieving maximum performance with minimum cost. The construction cost per area in the Netherlands is half of that in Germany and one-third of that in Switzerland. It was difficult for us as a Japanese practice to understand how to operate in an environment where architects cannot spend time and money developing details. How one can associate with this pragmatism creatively is a key to making a successful project. For example, we realized why some cases of Dutch architecture are based on radical concepts rather than on sensitive detailing. In the case of the project in Amsterdam, we had limited responsibilities during the construction phase. In fact, we supervised the construction phase mainly from a distance, using telephone, email, fax and only occasionally through site visits. In such a case, the relationship the architect develops with the client becomes very critical.

**TRAGANOÛ:** As foreign architects, what kinds of relationships did you develop with Dutch partners and collaborators, especially given the impetus that Dutch architects have received through government initiatives and overall public support?

**HOSOYA:** It took a while for me to understand that having a meeting in order to arrive at a consensus was a social habit in the Netherlands. In the Groningen project, the local government together with urban planners, private enterprises and architects developed the design together, forming an overall consensus regarding the project. Meetings are used for agreeing on an idea that makes everybody happy. We used the metaphor of the 'princess from the moon', a Japanese folktale,<sup>7</sup> for the master plan concept – an idea of a catalyst that connects the new with the existing. The idea of employing a foreign architect makes sense in such a context.

**TRAGANOÛ:** This is an interesting way of framing the input of the 'other', who even though catalytic in the local context eventually returns to where he or she comes from. So you, as a foreigner, never felt treated as an outsider in a negative sense?

**HOSOYA:** It is given that I am always being treated as an outsider and will always be a foreign architect. Even if I work in Japan, I would feel this way given my circumstances. However, I do not find my situation particularly unique or negative, except for the fact that it is difficult to get the job done if you do not speak the local language. Doesn't everybody work the same way?

**SCHAEFER:** What is interesting about the current time is that architecture culture is in many ways thoroughly globalized. Of course, there are regional differences, and these regional differences are very important. But in the end, the agenda

is set by a network of people who act very globally and who are interconnected through star culture and academia. This happens at the level of established architects who often are not only stars by virtue of being invited to the important competitions and winning them, but who also have a professorship at a prestigious university. The younger generations, too, forge their careers by hopping from one university to the next. This, for better or worse, is the background against which these individual movements you are describing play themselves out.

**TRAGANOU:** I wonder whether these two circles, the professional and the academic, are related?

**SCHAEFER:** Circles of the professional and academic worlds overlap. Architects who are very successful, like Rem Koolhaas or Jacques Herzog and Pierre De Meuron, are people who bridge this gap, obtaining legitimacy through their academic work while at the same time drawing commissions from the commercial world. In addition, they obtain visibility through professional and academic publications, for which you need to know the right journalists and the right magazines. In this model, constituted out of these three elements, successful careers play themselves out. This is simply one of the facts of contemporary architecture. Only rarely does an outsider rise to global awareness with respect to any of these three circles.

**TRAGANOU:** It is interesting, then, that the notion of the outsider is thus defined not only in relation to the politics of a given place, but rather in relation to these elite circles that control the world of architecture on a global scale. But, at the same time there is a degree of openness, so besides the large offices you have also some small practices that benefit from that.

**SCHAEFER:** For us this system is actually quite good – the experience at Harvard University was crucial. We are small, yet still fairly well anchored and connected. The system can be beneficial. But what I am saying is that this system needs to be understood on its own terms. It is a new phenomenon that an architect brings to a project not only architectural knowledge but access to an international circuit, to media exposure, information flows, or magazines. Architects have an effect on the built world but also a strong effect in the media and the market. This is the reason why brands with their flagship stores, and developers or investors with their flagship projects, are interested in star architects. Territorial displacement, a whiff of the exotic, is an essential ingredient in this kind of game.

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## MOBILITY IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY EUROPE: THE CASE OF SLOVENIA

8 The six Slovenian architectural offices involved in Sixpack are: Bevk Perovič Arhitekti (Matija Bevk, Vaso Perovič), Dekleva Gregorič Arhitekti (Aljoša Dekleva, Tina Gregorič), Elastik (Mika Cimolini, Igor Kebel), Maechtig Vrhunc Arhitekti (Tomaž Maechtig, Urša Vrhunc), Ofis Arhitekti (Rok Orman, Špela Videčnik), Sadar Vuga Arhitekti (Jurij Sadar, Boštjan Vuga).

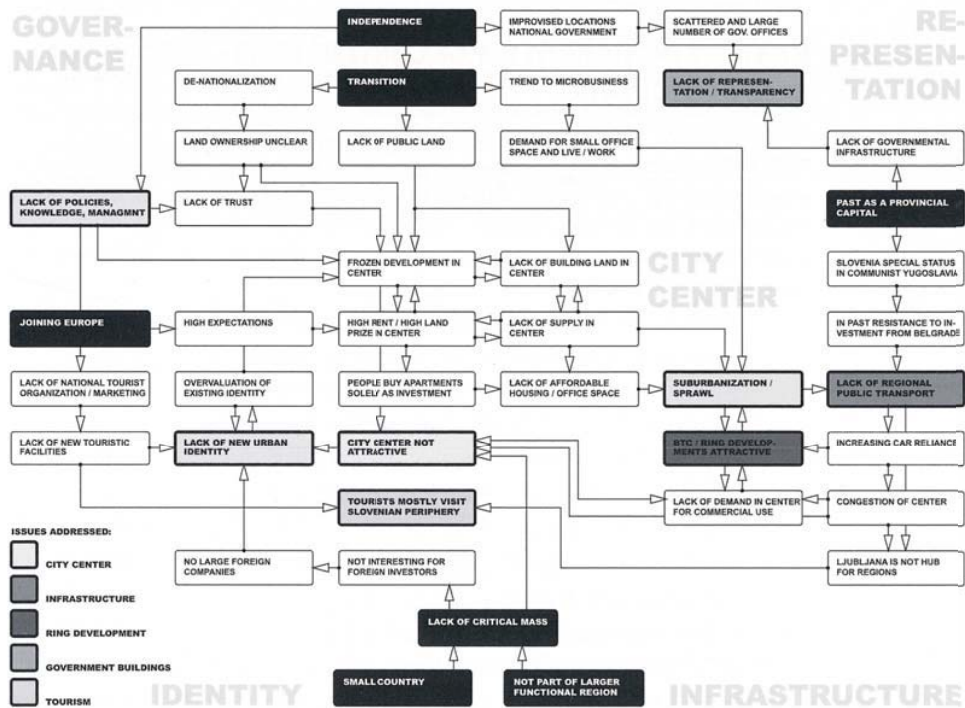
**TRAGANOU:** Markus, in 2006 you and your students at the Berlage Institute developed a project for the city of Ljubljana (Ljubljana: Urban Scripts for a Light Capital). Would you say that Ljubljana is a city that consciously took advantage of this system that you described above in their collaboration with you and the Berlage Institute? How did you become involved in that project?

**SCHAEFER:** The project was initiated in 2005 by a student of mine who is from Ljubljana and who suggested that the Berlage Institute does a study for the city. The Berlage Institute is very much a part of the international circuit we mentioned. Ljubljana, on the other hand, has a very strong internal and local architecture scene, which in many ways right now is detrimental to the city's development. There are so many local interests that, instead of helping to develop the city, they rather make an effort to block each other. These are local interests from a variety of sectors: architects, planners, investors and developers. Ljubljana and Slovenia move very cleverly on the international stage, but the construction scene is astonishingly introverted, mainly due to the lack of perceived opportunity and to high barriers of entry for foreigners of any discipline. The upside of this closed market is a healthy resistance to foreign influences. In spite of the general slowness with which change occurs, Slovenia is a place where young local talent gets a lot of opportunities and can be astonishingly experimental. The scene of young architects is very interesting and has gotten a certain international renown through the Sixpack exhibition and catalogue (DESMAN 2006; HRAUSKY 2004).<sup>8</sup> There might be wisdom in being slow.

**TRAGANOU:** I was intrigued by your final statement in the text you wrote about that project:

This project is based on an external point of view ... hence it cannot provide concrete proposals. Yet, this view from outside gave us the freedom to propose and illustrate processes which could potentially lead to substantive and new solutions. (SCHAEFER 2006)

I am especially interested in the way this statement resonates with your flow chart, which is a rather sharp criticism of the city (FIGURE 12.2). Do you think that despite this resistance to foreign influences the distant eye of a foreigner can produce change in the city by stirring up the waters? There is, of course, a long tradition of outsiders making strategic plans



12.2 Diagramming causes for the lack of development in the city of Ljubljana, Slovenia. © Markus Schaefer / Berlage Institute, 2005.

for foreign cities. In the early twentieth century, what equipped architects to be commissioned for such projects was often not only their expertise or fame but also the ideology of colonialism, as in Le Corbusier's plan for Algiers. What do you think is the ideological framework for an outsider-architect's involvement in such projects in contemporary times, and why would cities often prefer to have their involvement rather than the engagement of local architects?

SCHAEFER: It was very much the hope of some people in Ljubljana that someone who comes from the outside would not be a part of these current compromises and could bring fresh ideas. The desire was also – and this became, of course, more impossible to live up to – that an external agent could bring so much muscle, so much glamour, that it would simply overrule some of the local proponents. I think this was a dream which proved wrong, and it is actually good that it proved wrong. In the end, I believe to some degree in local agency, a healthy

sense of community. Groningen is a very good example. The city has a really good social contract, and I think that is why they are able to absorb so much foreign talent in a manner beneficial to the city. In Ljubljana, this social contract first needs to be established. Independence is still comparatively recent. Old economic, administrative and political structures are still apparent. The intellectual and political vanguard that fought for independence is by no means uncontested. The country is slowly moving from an old planned economy to a new, market-driven system. The sentence that you quoted before was a political sentence. It was clear that we were allowed to push the envelope, but in actuality we found a lot of closed doors simply because we were foreigners. In this context, we wanted to make sure that our ideas were not discarded simply because they would not immediately fit with local perceptions.

**TRAGANOU:** How did your proposal affect the city despite the fact that it may not be implemented?

**SCHAEFER:** We only did a study; in what way it might affect actual city planning still remains to be seen. It was important for us to show the necessity of understanding the current impasse in a precise and fruitful manner. In my opinion, situations which are healthy should be able to solve themselves. Bilbao is a very good example. The strategic basis for the changes in Bilbao has been established locally. An alliance of the public sector, institutions and local businesses established the strategy and saw it through. It was only at the end that they had to introduce a series of star architects such as Frank Gehry and Norman Foster almost like icing on the cake, but all the important strategic infrastructure had been established locally. That is why in the end, despite all the criticism of Frank Gehry's building and the perceived shallowness of Guggenheim's programming, the development is sustainable. Sustainability is hugely at risk when changes are implemented purely by foreigners. The most important step for Ljubljana is not to devise a new strategic plan, but to establish the framework in which development is possible. This has to do with clarifying land ownership, reducing the government's space requirement in the city, establishing a meaningful dialogue with the developers, provide long-term planning stability, establishing infrastructure and solving the problem of vehicular traffic.

**TRAGANOU:** Expanding our attention from Slovenia itself to the broader process of European integration, we may see that a new nation-state like Slovenia is interested in fostering not only the development of its own autonomous, national identity, but at the same time its relation with Europe, a Europe that simultaneously strives to define

dimensions of its new postnational identity. This process is orchestrated by the European Union with various projects that cross national borders, such as students' exchanges and academic collaborations between various European universities. It is astonishing to realize today that most architecture students throughout Europe complete a large part of their academic studies at different European universities by utilizing programs such as Erasmus and Socrates as well as the incredible number of other, more or less institutionalized opportunities. Would you say that this project of mobility and integration leads to the idea of abandoning conventional national categories, such as Dutch architecture or Swiss architecture, or do we, in fact, witness the opposite?

SCHAEFER: Maybe it is cynical, but in the end also pragmatic, to say the following: as long as there is interest in a national platform, as long as it is useful – and it will be useful for very long time still – it is not really in question. If we were visible in a publication of Swiss architects, of course we would not refuse such an opportunity, even if we don't perceive ourselves as a Swiss office at all. The same is true from the point of view of publishers, but we might equally well be part of a book on media, or on strategic architecture. The world of architecture is fairly promiscuous.

TRAGANOU: I would say that this is symptomatic of a broader contradiction, not only in the world of architecture. Thinking of the promotion that national architectures have enjoyed in the last ten years or so, such as Dutch architecture, we see that as the world becomes more globalized, national categories become stronger. This may be a resistance to globalization or just a marketing strategy as localities compete for differentiation and visibility on a globalized scene.

SCHAEFER: Yes, it becomes more a means of profiling.

TRAGANOU: So what do you gain by being a Swiss firm, or by being based in Switzerland, and being able to promote your practice abroad from that anchor point?

HOSOYA: I do not know the answer to that question, but one of the reasons why I decided to stay and practice architecture in Europe is that people still believe in architecture.

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## DISCIPLINARY MIGRATIONS: BEYOND ARCHITECTURE

TRAGANOU: It is interesting that you came to Europe because architecture is more appreciated there, but actually what characterizes your practice, as with most contemporary young offices like yours, is that you are involved in practices beyond architecture. How have contemporary offices like yours expanded the language and practice of architecture

9 In 'Mapping Switzerland' (2004–05), Hosoya Schaefer created eleven maps of Switzerland that attempt to 'find new ways to describe the identity of Switzerland ranging from the scientific to the artistic', according to the studio's website ([www.hosoyaschaefer.com/seedam\\_exhibition.htm](http://www.hosoyaschaefer.com/seedam_exhibition.htm)). The project was published in the Swiss weekly magazine *Weltwoche* (23 December 2004: 84–91), and in a shorter version in *Das Magazin*, the weekend magazine of the Swiss newspaper *Tages Anzeiger*, in collaboration with *The Economist*, in December 2003. The project was also exhibited at Kulturzentrum Seedamm in Pfäffikon, Switzerland, 1 May–19 June 2005.

**by doing projects that do not conventionally belong to the realm of architecture, despite your declared faith in the discipline?**

SCHAEFER: What is very interesting is that a set of discrete creative disciplines are now increasingly merging together into a continuous spectrum. Our office covers a range from architecture to graphic work, to media work, to strategic consulting. In many ways, this is very stimulating and interesting, but it is not unusual. A lot of offices, at least the more versatile ones, are operating like that. But it is interesting that this is happening in other disciplines too, like graphic design or industrial design, where we see similar moves in the direction of architecture. Today we are able to move flexibly from one discipline to the other because we live in a digital world, and in the end all these disciplines operate in similar programs, similar environments, similar professional relationships.

**TRAGANOU: Would you find any influences from your own backgrounds, in literature or neurobiology?**

HOSOYA: For me it is always very interesting to think about how one can create architecture in an environment where the communication structure is linguistically different.

SCHAEFER: This is the point where we are trying to redefine, argue and rethink the architectural profession as simply doing a building, or rather to understand architecture as a participant in larger systems. I was always interested in projects that enable us to think an idea across different disciplines. For instance, recently we did a pitch for a news studio for a TV company. The interesting thing about this news studio is that it is planned to be virtual. Of course it has real space where they film, but what you see on the screen in its largest degree is virtual, what is generated through the computer. This is an architectural type that consists not only of brick and mortar but also of bits. It is a hybrid type.

**TRAGANOU: I would like to discuss some of your projects that specifically relate to the aspect of mobility. I would consider your mapping Switzerland project<sup>9</sup> (FIGURE 12.3) as belonging to the same category, because one of the many functions of the map is being the major wayfinding tool of the traveler. Did you feel as if you took the role of travelers while doing this project, even though you, Markus, come from Switzerland?**

SCHAEFER: Mapping is in a way a site analysis, only dealing with broader issues. The Swiss mapping project was a self-initiated research project and a means for us to understand where we landed after we came back from abroad. We were trying to understand global issues through the specifics of the Swiss context.



## 12.3

Cities, brands and people most often associated with the words 'Swiss' or 'Switzerland' in Internet newsgroups.  
© Hosoya Schaefer Architects, 2004.

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## MOBILITY AND COMMUNICATION IN ARCHITECTURE EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

**TRAGANOU:** Coming to a very practical issue: how would you say that mobility affects the daily life of your practice? How do you work from a distance, for instance? Do you often use Skype?

**HOSOYA:** This does not happen so much among ourselves, because we are usually both in the office here in Zurich. But we use it for some projects that we do with a team in Tokyo, for instance, with whom we collaborate on competition projects or have renderings done. As soon as Skype became available time pressure was gone, and all of a sudden working with the team in Tokyo became simple.

**SCHAEFER:** Hiromi teaches at Cornell University, while I am teaching at the Berlage Institute. With our students at both institutions we often collaborate long-distance through Skype conferences. Then we have projects like one for National Geographic where we collaborate with a person in Scandinavia, an office in Milan, an office in Barcelona, and an individual in Los Angeles. These are people we collaborate with regularly, day to day. For the Mobiglobe media installation we did with the Danish company Shiftcontrol (FIGURE 12.1) we had day-to-day collaboration via Skype, via Wiki, or via FTP. With my students at the Berlage Institute we use Basecamp, a file-sharing website.

**TRAGANOU:** Would you say that the verbal aspect of communication that is necessitated by these new technological tools becomes stronger than it used to be in the conventional studio setting?

**SCHAEFER:** I think that a critical difference is the absence of the sketch. You have words, or illustrations as PDFs, or images as JPGs. But the hand sketch, in its immediacy and its haptic interaction, is now missing.

**TRAGANOU:** And what used to happen in the studio, where you had the charismatic figure of the master-architect who could sketch a solution to the architectural problem, this kind of relation between professors and students seems not to be feasible anymore in the digital environments. Can the myth of the master-architect be maintained through a tele-presence?

**SCHAEFER:** It is interesting that at OMA, Rem Koolhaas's tool is the fax machine, while our tools are email, Wiki and Skype. With the fax you can still sketch, it doesn't look good, but it visually conveys the idea. Every other day Koolhaas would get a 40-page set of drawings faxed to his hotel. He would

then look at it, sketch over it and then fax the pages back. When I work with the Danish interaction designers I make a long multiple-page sketch. I scan and email the sketch, but soon after that I visit Denmark and we conclude everything through face-to-face communication. I believe in the need for a face-to-face component of collaboration. Because students need more direct support, with them one needs to have face-to-face collaboration more frequently. Nevertheless, because of electronic communication devices, the teacher is always available, at least virtually.

**TRAGANO:** Would you say, then, that communication is now based more on a conceptual agreement rather than on being able to interfere with the visual languages? Do you find that this affects the process of the work, or do you see other possibilities that are equally productive?

**SCHAEFER:** What is truly interesting is what is lost in translation. When you sat next to the student you would always have a pen in your hand and you would always sketch. Now, when I am writing an email or when I am critiquing a PDF they sent, I have to be extremely precise in the way I discuss it, and still it is often misunderstood. It is incredibly hard to exactly convey an idea or a criticism and to completely control the project. You cannot make a little arrow and describe an iteration. Sometimes, to avoid this problem, I am sketching and scanning.

**HOSOYA:** It is true. On one hand, I miss the immediacy or the directness: everything takes much more time to explain or communicate the point. On the other hand, it is not always the case that I have a point or know the best answer. In such a case, it helps me to construct an idea.

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## FROM TRAVEL TO LONG-DISTANCE MANAGEMENT

**TRAGANO:** From the way you describe this condition of exchange with your distant partners – the dynamic between the urge for mobility and face-to-face communication on one hand, and the desire for immobility and efficient exchange on the other – it becomes obvious that what once used to be dealt with through ‘traveling’ is now resolved through what we may term ‘long-distance management’. The institutions that are the most relevant to us today are not those that deal with transportation but rather those that deal with communication; in other words, not those that facilitate our need for mobility but rather those that satisfy our desire for immobility.

**SCHAEFER:** The negative aspect is that often the precision in communication is lost. Too often communication is just idle chatter, made more burdensome by the need to spell everything out. It is essential to treat communication as a medium in its own right. Each medium defines a specific way of collaboration. Whether faxes are exchanged with hand sketches, a Skype session is simply left on so that a long-distance presence becomes almost environmental, phone conferences structure a large team, or documents are exchanged in defined intervals over FTP, each collaboration needs to find its own rules.

**TRAGANOU:** It seems that what was considered 'disembodiment' until recently, with all the negative connotations of the term, is replaced today by new ways of operation, new types of spaces that include the 'here' and 'there', and within which physical traveling is just one of the options. It is not a coincidence that 'slowness' and 'immobility' are becoming the new keywords in the recent discourse; physical mobility is not as desirable as it used to be.

**SCHAEFER:** Mobility is becoming increasingly important through its limitations. Dwindling resources and environmental costs become increasingly an issue and the ability to move more precious.

**TRAGANOU:** The unsustainability of mobility?

**SCHAEFER:** Of our current global system as a whole, in which mobility is a crucial factor.