

Designing in a finite world: urbanism, architecture and resource-consciousness



Source: Satoyama Landscapes - Yoshiharu Tsukamoto (Atelier Bow-Wow)

Research seminar on teaching practices

Friday, March 6th 2026
14:00-16:00

Location: ieu : Site USquare (ULB-VUB) OpenLab.brussels
Room A.1.23.a (Blvd Général Jacques 210A, 1050 Ixelles)
Possibility to attend also online

To confirm your presence (in person/online) write to:
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POLITECNICO MILANO 1863 | DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN STUDIES



LABORATORY URBANISM INFRASTRUCTURE ECOLOGY

Organised by the iITSE
(Interfaculty Institute for Socio-Ecological Transformations)
in collaboration with the AIA and SUFI
(ULB/EPB/BATir research laboratories)
the OpenLab.brussels
and the DASTU, Politecnico di Milano
(Department of Architecture and Urban Studies)

Designing with what's already there: resource-conscious approaches in architectural and urban pedagogy

Architectural and urban design education is increasingly confronted with finite resources, planetary boundaries, and layered socio-material transformations. This seminar proposes a collective reflection on how design teaching can engage more directly with the realities of place, existing material stocks, and forms of making that do not rely on continuous extraction. Building on the site-specific approaches of **Satoyama Landscapes** and the everyday spatial observations developed within Atelier Bow-Wow, the event considers how **fieldwork**, close reading of context, and incremental interventions can strengthen the connection between design practice, land, and the already-there. Particular attention is given to methods that foreground **territorial interpretation**, material reuse, and the “inner rhythms” of everyday life.

Rather than framing **socio-ecological transitions** as mainly technological or policy-driven challenges, this seminar foregrounds their intrinsically **situated, temporal, and affective dimensions**. It invites participants to consider how understanding a place requires time; time to observe its rhythms, to perceive its stratifications, and to slowly develop a form of attachment that is not filtered solely through academic or intellectual frameworks. By encouraging practices that slow down and make room for **embodied experience**, the seminar emphasizes the importance of reconnecting with territories, landscapes, and built environments through real contact rather than abstraction. Such an approach highlights the **pedagogical value of noticing**: noticing materials, their uses, their wear, spaces evolving, and communities inhabiting.

It is in these sensitive and subtle registers that resource-conscious design can open new ways of imagining socio-ecological futures, not by inventing from scratch, but by learning to work with, care for, and reinterpret what is already there. Through this lens, architectural and urban pedagogy becomes a critical space for exploring transitions that are not only ecological, but also cultural, experiential, and relational. The seminar thus positions design education as a practice capable of fostering deeper forms of environmental responsibility, grounded in attention, slowness, and meaningful engagement with the lived world.

Hosted by iiTSE (ULB) and the OpenLab.brussels (ULB+VUB), the seminar brings these questions into a shared discussion format. A presentation by Yoshiharu Tsukamoto will introduce the work of Satoyama Landscapes as a point of departure, followed by a round-table exploring how such approaches might inform architectural and urban pedagogy across scales, from territorial frameworks to spatial detail.

Program Overview

13:30–14:00 – Coffee & Informal Networking

14:00–14:15 – Introduction by Geoffrey Grulois and Hera Van Sande

14:15–14:45 – Presentation of Stoyama Forest - **Yoshiharu Tsukamoto (Atelier Bow-Wow)**

14:45–16:00 – Round-table discussions on key themes

16:00–16:30 – Wrap-up & Drinks

Invited contributors to the round table

Geoffrey Grulois – LOUISE, La Cambre Horta, ULB

Hera Van Sande – Organiser & Moderator, Archipel

Tiphaine Abenia – La Cambre Horta, ULB

Laurens Bekemans – BC architects & materials & studies / RWTH

Andrea Bortolotti – Department of Architecture and Urban Studies, Politecnico di Milano

Organised by

Giulia Caterina Verga – Organiser & Moderator, SUFI, École Polytechnique, ULB (iiTSE member)

Hera Van Sande – Organiser & Moderator, Archipel

Laurens Bekemans – Organiser, BC architects & materials & studies / RWTH

Geoffrey Grulois – Organiser & Moderator, La Cambre Horta, ULB (iiTSE member)

Samia Ben Rajeb – Organiser, École Polytechnique, ULB (iiTSE member, OpenLab.brussels)

Andrea Bortolotti – Organiser, Department of Architecture and Urban Studies, Politecnico di Milano

Ahmed Zaib Khan – Organiser, École Polytechnique, ULB (iiTSE member)

Camilo Paez – Organiser, École Polytechnique, ULB (iiTSE member)