

## STUDY DAY

Organised by the CERILAC and LéaV laboratories,  
the Université de Paris, the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Paris Val de Seine  
and the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Versailles  
3 December 2021, Paris (both in-person and online)

# Practice-based research PhD: an opportunity to develop research within architectural and design practice International call for papers

During this study day we wish to investigate the contribution to architectural research made by PhD theses, notably in the exploration of conception processes. This call for papers is addressed to researchers and academics developing research that associates theory and practice, studying epistemological and methodological issues as well as practical tools, within firms operating in the field of design (architecture, urbanism, landscape architecture, scenography, etc....).

In France, the CIFRE<sup>1</sup> scheme provides the opportunity to develop a direct relationship between research and practice, allowing the PhD candidate to enrol on a PhD program at university whilst also working within architectural practice. It thus allows academic research to embed itself within the professional reality of project creation in architectural practices (or, more widely, conception disciplines). In this context, the project occupies a central place within research, as much as a practical investigation tool as an object of study.

We wish to broaden horizons by comparing the French scheme with other forms of close collaboration between PhD candidates and architecture or design practices.

What are the epistemological benefits of this research? What methodological specificities and contributions does it develop? What specific research tools are developed? How does this approach reinvigorate architectural research?

## I. Context

In France, the PhD in architecture has been in existence since 2005. The collective thinking specific to the discipline has been developing since then via a series of seminars and publications organised by different research laboratories<sup>2</sup>. Frequently called into question, the place of project conception within PhD research and the proximity between the study terrain and the researcher continues to generate debate.

The CIFRE scheme, increasingly present within architectural practices<sup>3</sup>, intervenes directly in these fields of research by multiplying different approaches of action-research<sup>4</sup> aiming for a broader generalisation of knowledge from the starting point of experimentation within professional practice. As architecture is "first and foremost a professional practice" (FINDELI, COSTE, 2014), the alliance between practice and research is

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<sup>1</sup> Set up in France in 1981, the Industrial Convention for Training through Research (CIFRE) is a framework overseen by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, and managed by the National Association of Research and Technology (ANRT). It aims to develop innovation and research in France in all socio-economic sectors, including architecture. In practical terms it is a form of PhD funding allowing the candidate to divide their time between a company, that could be an architectural practice, and one or several public research laboratories, for a period of 3 years.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Bibliography, notably the Study Day organised by the EVCAU, *Le doctorat en architecture : la richesse d'une polysémie ?* Study Days 19-20 November 2020 via videoconference at the ENSA Paris Val-de-Seine, at the LéaV, *Co-concevoir en architecture : Formes de collaboration et hybridations de savoirs* Study Day 16 October 2020 at l'ENSA Versailles. Seminar 11 March 2021 via videoconference at the ENSA Marseille, at the PROJECT(S) laboratory: *Les formes de recherche par le projet*.

<sup>3</sup> The first PhD candidate to defend their CIFRE thesis undertaken within an architectural practice was in 2009 and CIFRE PhD candidates in architectural practices represent 35% of CIFREs in this domain, Cf. BRAUP "Doctorat en CIFRE. La recherche architecturale, urbaine et paysagère au sein d'une structure professionnelle. Catalogue 2004-2020", ministère de la Culture, 2021, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Or other modalities to be defined, participatory observation, etc.

particularly important. The contours, methods, and tools of these types of research remain to be clarified to enable PhD candidates to appropriate them.

## II. Objectives

This study day will bring together knowledge and feedback from experience to identify the diversity of methodological positions within the architectural or design firms research framework in the aim of nourishing a dialogue between researcher-practitioners participating in the development of research tools via the project within conception disciplines.

Our intention is to publish a cartography of practice-based methodologies and research tools, developed during practice-based architectural research PhDs.

This study day will alternate presentations with round-table discussions.

The call for papers is open to the following candidates:

- PhD candidates, doctors working in architectural practice, thesis supervisors and directors, researchers in other fields of conception (landscape architecture, design, etc). We are particularly interested in papers based on concrete examples and issues, that take a particular interest in the detail of methodological decision making.
- Researchers, architecture PhD candidates who have completed or are undertaking their PhD in another country or in joint supervision with another country, whose method is analogous to the CIFRE framework, or that develops a certain form of research associated with the project. These contributions will provide an exogenous viewpoint to the French context.
- Researchers and PhD candidates working on architectural epistemology, notably those for whom the conception process and research methodology in architecture form the object of their research.

## III. Axes

Contribution proposals can respond to one or several of the following axes:

### 1. Knowledge targeted through project-based research<sup>5</sup>

Objective: Clarification of the specific place of project-based research within the framework of a combined research process and professional conception practice.

What kind of knowledge does project-based research attempt to produce? How can project-based research go beyond the status of being a specific solution to a specific situation, to produce more general and widely transferable forms of knowledge? Does this created knowledge participate in the elaboration of a theory of architecture? In what conditions does the necessary proximity of the study of a conception process allow for the creation of objective knowledge?

### 2. Actor relationships and the contextual constraints associated with the PhD in professional practice

Objective: Proposition of a methodology of observation, identification, and understanding of the constraints and complexity of the real professional context. Description of the constraints and power relationships between the different actors (academic and professional), specific to the establishment of a practice-based research strategy.

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<sup>5</sup>Alain Findeli and Anne Coste define project-research as follows: "the activity of the project is a practical (or ethical) philosophy, and not only a creative practice, [which] implies that the most appropriate method for conducting research has the following characteristics: - it is anchored in the project, - it is empirical and must allow the observation of the exterior world on which the project is based and the internal world of the project actors (intentions, values, expectations, etc), - it engages in reflexive work "in action" and interpretative work "out of action", - ", FINDELI, Alain, COSTE, Anne, « De la recherche-cr ation   la recherche-projet: un cadre th orique et m thodologique pour la recherche architecturale », *Lieux Communs*, n  10, 2007, p.153.

How to create space for reflexivity between architectural practice and research laboratories? How to make sense of the diversity of constraints and the multiplicity of actors? How to account for the temporal differences between research (long) and the project in architectural practice (short)? How to account for the cognitive bias of the observer-participant in the research? How to assure the critical distance of the researcher necessary for the production of objective knowledge?

### 3. Project-research strategy

Objective: Identification of work strategies that could reconcile the differences in interests, actors, and temporalities between research and architectural practice, starting from clearly defined protocols and real lived experiences.

What architecture and design research strategies can we identify today? How does one construct the methodology of a thesis undertaken within an architecture or design practice (subject construction, case-study choices, action plans, ...)? What is the status of the researcher during the production of projects? How are projects developed within practice used in the research?

### 4. The operational tools of practice-based research

Objective: Development of research tools from situations and strategies proposed from an operational viewpoint, explaining the method of data collection and restitution of the reality of the context.

Which tools facilitate the understanding of the diverse constraints and the multiple actors? How can research be transcribed and capitalised upon over time during the study of a process as complex as that of an architectural project? What observation and data collection criteria can the researcher put in place? According to what modalities (brainstorming days, workshops, ...) can the reflection be shared within the practice in connection with the laboratory?

### 5. The form of the research results

Objective: Understanding the specificity of project-research theses and exploring the diversity of their forms.

What are the possible formats and supports for the presentation of the thesis? How can the tools of the architect or the designer be used in the form taken by the thesis? How can research incite evolution in the postures and practices of architect-researchers, of architectural practices, of practitioners in general?

## IV. **Modality**

The communication proposals will include:

- A heading mentioning the axis of reflection and the title of the proposal,
- An abstract (maximum 3 000 characters including spaces),
- Six keywords reflecting the issues addressed,
- A short bio-bibliographic presentation (maximum 1000 characters including spaces) specifying the name under which the author wishes to be cited, a telephone contact, an email address, and their institutional affiliation.

**Abstracts are to be submitted before September 15, 2021, to the following address:**  
[cerilac.architecture.jed2021@gmail.com](mailto:cerilac.architecture.jed2021@gmail.com)

Please indicate the numbers of the axes to which your proposal responds in the SUBJECT of the email.

The scientific committee will pay particular attention to proposals that address methodological and epistemological research questions, rather than presentations of thesis advancement.

## V. **Calendar:**

	July	2021	Launch of the Call for papers
15	September	2021	Abstract submission deadline (3 000 characters including spaces)
15	October	2021	Participation notification
15	November	2021	Paper submission deadline (20 000 characters including spaces) for pre-proceeding publication
<b>03</b>	<b>December</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>Study Day</b>
15	December	2021	Selection of papers for publication and exchange with authors to make corrections
	Spring	2022	Submission of definitive papers for publication
	Autumn	2022	Publication of the proceedings of the study day

#### VI. Selected bibliography:

BIAU Véronique, FENKER Michael, ZETLAOUI-LEGER Jodelle, *Le doctorat en CIFRE, Une expérience partenariale*, ENSA Paris-La Villette - Let-Lavue, Paris, 2021.

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DEVISME, Laurent, « La condition grisante de la CIFRE », *Les Cahiers de la recherche architecturale urbaine et paysagère* [en ligne], 20 janvier 2020, accessed 29 August 2020.

DEVISME, Laurent, *Trajectoires doctorales*. Les cahiers de la recherche architecturale et urbaine, Paris, Éd. du Patrimoine, Centre des Monuments Nat, 2012.

DULAURANS, Marlène, « CIFRE : parcours de compétences d'une thèse annoncée », *Revue française des sciences de l'information et de la communication*, n° 6, 2015.

FINDELI, Alain, COSTE, Anne, « De la recherche-crédation à la recherche-projet: un cadre théorique et méthodologique pour la recherche architecturale », *Lieux Communs*, n° 10, 2007, p. 139-161.

HANROT Stéphane, "Quels rapports entre la recherche et projet dans les disciplines de l'architecture, de l'urbanisme, du paysage et du design" Actes des rencontre doctorales en architecture 2015.

LANDON, Aurélie, « S'observer / Participer : la recherche en contrat CIFRE, construire une démarche de recherche-action autour du projet urbain ». Rencontres doctorales en architecture : "Quels apports entre recherche et projet dans les disciplines de l'architecture, de l'urbanisme, du paysage et du design ?", Sep 2015, Marseille, France.

LENGEREAU Eric, *Architecture et construction des savoirs. Quelle recherche doctorale ?* Éditions Recherches, 2008.

ROLLOT Mathias, *La recherche architecturale : Repères, outils, analyses*, Editions de l'Espérou, 2019.

SAINT-MARTIN (DE), Claire, PILOTTI, Anne, VALENTIM, Silvia, « La réflexivité chez le doctorant-praticien-chercheur. Une situation de liminalité », *Interrogations ?*, n° 19, « Implication et réflexivité – II. Tenir une double posture », December 2014,

SOULÉ, Bastien, « Observation participante ou participation observante ? Usages et justifications de la notion de participation observante en sciences sociales », *Recherches qualitatives*, vol. 27, n° 1, 2007, p. 127-140.

*Les formes de recherche par le projet*. Séminaire du jeudi 11 Mars 2021 en Visio conférence à l'ENSA Marseille, au laboratoire PROJECT(S).

*Le doctorat en architecture : la richesse d'une polysémie ?* Journées d'étude du 19 et 20 Novembre 2020 par visioconférence à l'ENSA Paris Val-de-Seine

*Co-concevoir en architecture : Formes de collaboration et hybridations de savoirs*, Study Day, 16 October 2020, ENSA Versailles.

*L'architecture entre pratique et connaissance scientifique*, conference, 16 January 2015, Collège de France

VII. **Scientific committee**

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VIII. **Organisation committee**

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