

Smart Urban Redesign

Places for People: Towards a
New Identity for Limburg

Inaugural Speech
Dr. Nurhan Abujidi

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Smart Urban Redesign

**Places for People:
Towards a New Identity for Limburg**

Inaugural speech given by Dr. Nurhan Abujidi, marking her professorship of Smart Urban Redesign at the Faculty of Bèta Sciences and Technology, Zuyd University of Applied Sciences, on Thursday 1 March 2018

1

Introduction: Personal note

Dear Executive Board,
highly valued colleagues,
family and friends

You will have noticed that all the speakers today are Dutch speaking (Belgians or Dutch), including my own son, while I am the only English speaker in this whole ceremony. A situation that I always experience in my meetings in the Province, Parkstad with bewonersplatform and many other meetings at Zuyd that most of the time are in Dutch. A funny situation that confronts me with the question:

What should a Palestinian Architect/ Urban planner do in Limburg?

I even got a nickname; the *Engels talig Lector* or the *Buitenlander lector*.

After two years of hard work, many meetings and drinking lots of coffee, people have got to know me better. At the international design workshops they experienced how passionate and highly motivated I am about my work, witnessing the common goals and similar passions we share in changing their cities and neighborhoods for the better. Consequently, language, cultural or other difference become irrelevant.

During this speech I will answer the above question and share with you the three passions that drive my career and research plan at Zuyd, namely :

- a. Sustainability in its broader meaning (resilient architecture and urbanism)
- b. Placemaking - Designing for people
- c. Education by involvement (Learning by doing)

I received my architecture training at Birzeit University, in which I learned the power of architects and architecture in changing history and societies. Architecture can be used for both social oppression as well as for emancipation and empowerment, looking at the two famous examples of Haussmann's renewal project in Paris and social architec-

ture and urbanism concepts by Jane Jacobs in the United States (Lin & Mele, 2013). Something that I personally experienced growing up in the occupied Palestinian Territories. I appreciated from a very young age the beauty that lies in every detail, smell, color and spatial experience in Palestinian vernacular architecture and landscape, that form a strong part of the Palestinian personal, collective and national identity.

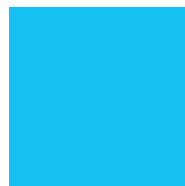
I started my career in heritage conservation and urban regeneration by heading the first national program in Palestine in more than 60 heritage sites. The deteriorating conditions of neighborhoods due to long years of Israeli Colonialism and neglect constituted the prime challenge and yet a great opportunity at the same time. The question that I was confronted with was *how can we improve the quality of life in such poor neighborhoods with very limited resources?* The lack of highly advanced materials and technology urged me and my team to utilize and develop the local expertise in construction techniques (cross vaults), traditional materials (lime mortar) that are more reversible and have less negative impacts on the built environment. Here, as you can see I practiced sustainability out of necessity rather than following theory or concepts as was the fashion of the times. Most important in this stage was engaging and involving local experience and the local community. This project was chosen by UNESCO as one of the best practices in urban regeneration in historic cities.

After several years working on diverse projects I was convinced that in such extreme urban conditions people are obliged to be creative and explore alternative ways for survival. At the same time you learn as a professional the endless potentials of rich experiences that the city and its public space can offer.

Since I came to Europe in 2000 I have been involved in research and projects in 4 European Universities for which I headed several research projects and taught design studios on complex urban issues: From the poor neighborhoods of Molenbeek and Scharbeek to the newly built green Valdespartera neighborhood in Zaragoza, Spain. My main concerns in my role as architect/activist were focused on questions such as *who makes the city?* Or, in another words for whom should we design cities?

I believe that Education is one of the most powerful tools to facilitate change. Therefore, I brought my personal debate and curiosity to work with my students in architecture and urbanism on experimental projects. Thus, students in architecture (US) from first till the fourth year got the chance to go through a complete design cycle (research, analysis, concept design and implementation), not a common practice in Architecture schools. By implementing these projects they learn how heavy real materials can be, they learn that the city and its community should serve different types of user groups whose needs are not always addressed in architectural or urban design proposals. They learn that architecture and urbanism is broader than and extends well beyond just bricks and mortar. Architecture and urbanism is about the community.

In the rest of the speech I will show you how the three passions that I developed in my previous career will shape my research plan at Zuyd in connection to the contemporary urban challenges in Limburg. I will demonstrate that we need an integral and interdisciplinary approach to develop sustainable neighborhoods and cities, all the while with the focus on the role of public space in improving life quality, social inclusion and interaction as well as safety and wellbeing. Consequently, I will broach the fundamental role of public space revitalization in contributing to the socio-economic development in the city/region.



2

New Urban Agenda for Contemporary Challenges

We face serious environmental impacts related to urban growth, climate change, and the natural depletion of resources. These impacts are connected with our consumption and production pattern that follows a 'take-make-consume and dispose' linear process. The built environment is a major player in this field. The built environment is responsible for 24% of greenhouse gas emissions, that account for 40% of the world's total Primary Energy Consumption (PEC) and for no less than 50% of extracted materials. In the EU-28, about 70% of the population lives in urban areas, and this share is expected to increase in the future, consuming about 80% of the energy produced in the EU and generating up to 85% of its GDP.

Furthermore, by 2050, 75% of the world's population will live in cities, while the population is likely to exceed 11 billion by the end of the 21st century (EEA 2016). In parallel, cities are key contributors to urban sustainability, social development and environmental performance. They have the potential to be places of innovation and creativity. It is thus pivotal to create an urban design and planning strategy that is both socially viable and environmentally sustainable.

To deal with the current environmental and urban challenges and to achieve sustainable urban development, Europe adopted the new concept of Circular Economy (CE). CE is defined as *"an economic and industrial system based on the reuse of products and raw materials, and the restorative capacity of natural resources. It attempts to minimize value destruction in the overall system and to maximize value creation in each link in the system. A circular economy thus provides opportunities to create wellbeing, growth and jobs, while reducing environmental pressures. The concept can, in principle, be applied to all kinds of natural resources, including biotic and abiotic materials, water and land."* (EEA 2016)

CE is based on five leading principles: – Design out waste – Build resilience through diversity – Using Energy from renewable resources – Think in systems – Think in cascades.

The previous principles compose the Dutch 2050 CE vision that aims at reaching nearly zero energy building and closed materials cycles by integrating smart technical solutions with social and economic innovation.

3

Context - Limburg

Many cities and towns across Europe currently face the effects of ageing and depopulation. In shrinking areas, the existing physical and social structure is under pressure. Houses are difficult to sell, schools need to close, services and amenities become too expensive to maintain. As a matter of fact, depopulation touches upon all aspects of daily life. To overcome the consequences of shrinkage joint action is needed. Local authorities need to cooperate with citizens to find ways to maintain the quality of life in their city or town (EUKN, 2012). However, local communities (citizens, government, social institutions) struggle with their new role in reinventing new ways of living together in cities, neighborhoods and public spaces.

The Limburg region experienced a large economic transition from an agricultural based economic region towards an industrial economic region due to mining. Between 1900 and 1974, the mining industry rapidly became the main economic pillar of the region, influencing many aspects of local society, economy and urban development. The new landscape that resulted from this transformation was characterized by fast urbanization, large industrial complexes, new infrastructures and a loss of green space in the region. Moreover, due to a need for manpower, the region was subject to several successive waves of immigration. When, at the end of the 1960's and beginning of the 1970's, the mining industry in Western Europe collapsed, the region entered a new phase, meeting the following challenges that can be also seen as potentials for future developments:

- Old building stock and decay of housing and infrastructures
- Demographic decline
- Economic decline¹
- Vacancy problems²

In Limburg, the demographic transformation and spatial processes are also reflected in the social dynamics of the region. Social cohesion is under stress, identity, sense of community are decreased. This is consequently manifested in empty streets, empty squares, underused parks and playgrounds, vacant buildings. (Vermeij & Steenbekkers 2015). For instance, the study in 43 deprived Dutch neighborhoods by Van Nes, & López (2016) highlights that in Limburg there is strong interconnection between insecurity, population structure change (in terms of age, immigration, wealth and health) and the accessibility, connectedness, vitality, social inclusion and identity of neighborhoods and public spaces³.

Nowadays Limburg still faces the effects of these challenges, and takes a front running position in the solution by first acknowledging the reality that Limburg is a shrinking region. Secondly by developing a spatial restructuring program for co-adaptation, transformation and restructuring of urban areas and cities such as employment, housing, infrastructure, amenities, retail and leisure etcetera as can be seen in the Parkstad vision for 2025 (Heyning et al 2013).

The SURD research agenda tackles part of the regional challenges (eg. population shrinkage, vacancy, and decay of housing and infrastructures). It complements the previously mentioned efforts and programs put forward by regional and local stakeholders. It thus builds its research lines upon the potential and regional initiatives on *new energy, materials, housing retrofitting, and inner city revitalization* promoted by Brightlands campuses on Materials, Food and Smart Services. It complements and connects to the other programs proposed by Parkstad (IBA, social restructuring, Energy transition, urban transformation...) and the Limburg region social agenda.

4

Smart Urban redesign (SURD) research agenda

To deal with the current environmental and urban challenges and to achieve sustainable urban development, Europe has adopted the new concept of Circular Economy (CE). CE is defined as *“an economic and industrial system based on the reuse of products and raw materials, and the restorative capacity of natural resources. It attempts to minimize value destruction in the overall system and to maximize value creation in each link in the system. A circular economy thus provides opportunities to create wellbeing, growth and jobs, while reducing environmental pressures. The concept can, in principle, be applied to all kinds of natural resources, including biotic and abiotic materials, water and land.”* (EMA 2012,2013, and EEA 2016)

CE is based on five leading principles: – Design out waste – Build resilience through diversity – Using Energy from renewable resources – Think in systems – Think in cascades.

The previous principles compose the Dutch 2050 CE and Energy Performance Building Directive vision that aims at reaching nearly zero energy buildings and closed materials cycles via integrating smart technical solutions with social and economic innovations.

The SURD research agenda adopts the CE principles from a Regenerative (materials, sustainable energy, people and places) and Urban Metabolism (flows) perspective, thus approaching the urban system as a complex, adaptive and dynamic mechanism-process. Thinking in terms of cohesion between places and flows can provide a starting point for formulating a sustainable urban development agenda. Sustainable urban development must strive to link the two, not by fighting against the flows (in spatial, ecological, social, cultural and/or economic terms), but by accommodating these in a more sustainable way and discovering optimal connections.

Accordingly, SURD builds its **vision** around the societal challenges in health and sustainable resources, with an important role for urban renewal, smart devices, materials, energy, production and services for wellbeing and vital neighborhoods in Limburg. SURD will not solve all the

societal challenges but will contribute in collaboration with partners in developing suitable scenarios and projects to deal with them.

The research agenda of SURD is thus led by the following question:

What design strategies and technologies are needed for the urban renewal in the specific context of Limburg that improve life quality, wellbeing and livability?

To answer this research question, SURD intends to work on the following three research lines that are interconnected in scale and position in the built environment:

4.1 Sustainable Energy in the Built Environment

This line focuses on combining material science with energy, building technology and urban dynamics that affect the city/neighborhood design, developing the knowledge framework necessary for developing, realizing and monitoring building and area-integrated solar energy systems, covering the development of innovative materials for energy applications and energy storage solutions. Articulating the concept of a zero energy built environment, the research aims at developing design and implementing technological solutions and interventions to meet local current and future energy demand. This research line comprises the Bijzonder lectoraat headed by my colleague dr. Zeger vroom.

4.2 Circular Building Technology

The circular building technology line aims at the advancement of the knowledge framework to design, develop, realize, operate and decommission lifecycle zero energy buildings. As well as building envelope components in the context of the existing and new building stock based on the concept of RUM. In this research line, RUM is translated in circular material cycles (reusing, recycling, and regenera-

ting), resulting in a lower environmental impact of the built environment. The research line covers new technologies such as 3D visual design and printing, smart regenerative materials, and reversible building design for existing and new buildings. The CBT line develops its activities through the leading research questions:

How to design, develop, realize, operate, decommission and test lifecycle zero energy buildings and building envelope components based on circular material cycles?

Testing, validation and monitoring for the two research lines will be mainly in the Wijk van Morgen⁴.

4.3 Urban Transformations

The transition of a territory is never socially neutral. Thus, the urban transformation line focuses on the urban, physical, social, cultural and spatial revitalization of cities, neighborhoods, and public spaces. Developing a learning environment in which technical experts (Zuyd staff and students), citizens and local stakeholders collaborate to develop urban design strategies to improve the quality of life in their neighborhoods. This will branch out from the concrete need and interest of the community via a social mobilization and actions of self-organization. The added value of this line lies in the spatial, social and policy improvement measures that will result from it. Consequently, best practices that can be useful for policy makers/cities can be developed. It should be highlighted here that this approach may deal with and affect any urban structure while focusing on interventions in public spaces.

4.3.1 Public Space as a Tool for Urban Regeneration

Human beings are social beings and public spaces have always been the stage of interaction, socialization and representation of a society as well as of a culture ever since the Greek Agora (Carmona, Heath, Oc, & Tiesdell, 2010). The role of public space has changed throughout history; the profound changes our cities have undergone during the industrial and technological revolution have modified the way people access and engage in the public domains (Gehl, 2010). The introduction of motorized vehicles and mass consumption commercial centers challenged the traditional view of public spaces and new types of public spaces in time have emerged. More recently, at the outset of the digital revolution, some analysts predicted that information technology would have sanctioned the death of public place (Foth, 2011) by the new generations' orientation towards new technology and virtual social interaction beside other reasons that weakened the role of public space as a catalyzer for socio-cultural interaction.

An attractive and shared public space is fundamental for the social and cultural functioning of a neighborhood and the wellbeing of its inhabitants. Public space contributes to the identity, sustainability and livability of neighborhoods.

Urban transformation line articulates placemaking⁵ for wellbeing and vitality, a concept using innovative urban design and spatial planning strategies as a tool to transform neighborhoods and public spaces. The research is based on the fact that people have better health when they live in communities that are designed to support day-to-day healthy choices, such as being physically active, and engaging in positive social interactions (physical and mental health). Thus, the design of public space and its materiality using technical and non-technical solutions can organize social relations, improve security, safety, wellbeing and livability by creating interactive settings for vital communities, consequently, developing a strong place-oriented and collective identity.

4.3.2 Tactical Urbanism as a Tool for Placemaking

Many names have been used to describe the overall trend towards this inexpensive, smaller, local approach to urban development. To name just a few, it has been called Guerrilla, Informal, Spontaneous, Temporary, Pop-up, Insurgent, Iterative, every day, DIY as well as Tactical Urbanism. For this project we will use 'Tactical Urbanism' because it includes a larger spectrum than just informal, illegal, urban interventions. Tactical urbanism aims at developing urban practices with the use of new technologies, which improve the liveability and spatial sustainability of our towns and cities, starting from the street, block, and public space. It also aims at re-conquering the city from institutional and economic organizations by mobilizing the bottom-up energy of the city and enabling citizens to take part in the shaping of their daily environment. Lydon and Garcia in their book do an excellent job of defining what tactical urbanism is and isn't, and the various forms it takes. As they define it today: "tactical urbanism" is all about *a new generation of small-scale urban design interventions that are low-risk, cheap, quick, and easy to implement.*" For citizens, "it allows the immediate reclamation, redesign, or reprogramming of public space. For developers or entrepreneurs, it provides a means of collecting design intelligence from the market they intend to serve. For advocacy organizations, it's a way to show what is possible to garner public and political support. And for government, it's a way to put best practices into, well, practice — and quickly!" Tactical urbanism efforts are largely targeted at "vacant lots, empty storefronts, overly wide streets, highway underpasses, surface parking lots, and other under-used public space (Lydon and Garcia, 2015).

Tactical urbanism envisions existing urban constraints (social, cultural, economic) - as opportunities, rather than as barriers. Main objectives of tactical urbanism as explained by Lydon (2015) and adopted by this project proposal are:

- a deliberate, phased approach to instigating change;
- the offering of local solutions for local planning challenges;
- short-term commitment and realistic expectations;
- low-risks, with a possibly high reward;
- the development of social capital between citizens and the building of organizational capacity between public-private institutions, non-profits, and their constituents.

The emphasis of this research line is thus on designing, implementing and monitoring smart, low - cost urban interventions, consequently, generating attractive, healthy, sustainable neighborhoods and public spaces.

The smart urban design strategies and interventions focus and questions are:

What design scenarios/toolkits need to be developed to enable physical activity , social interaction to improve wellbeing and vitality in neighborhoods

How can we integrate local resources (recycled materials), smart materials and technology (smart devices, ICT, energy) to design attractive and healthy public space and neighborhoods?

Depending on the context, this can be done in:

1. A simple, low-tech interventions (pop-ups from recycled materials, local resources) using a participatory and bottom up approach.
2. Highly technological urban solutions that deal with health or social issue such as physical mobility of old people, or encouraging interactive playing for kids in public spaces using (smart devices, energy technology, smart materials, ...etc) or using sustainable energy in neighborhood for safety and security.....etc. The research themes are in collaboration with local stakeholders, local industry (MKB) and entrepreneurs. (See Fig. 1)

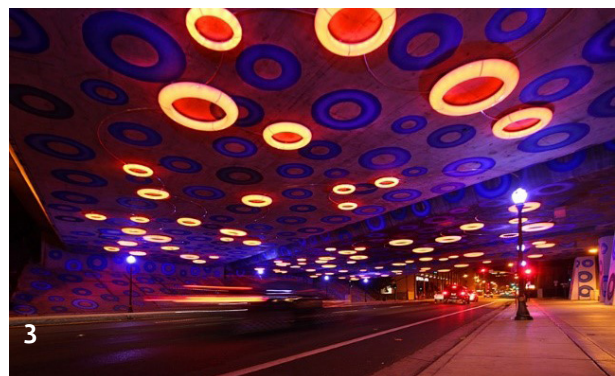


Fig. 1 | examples of urban interventions in public space.

- 1) low tech: Park urbana – Heerlen
- 2) high tech: Nike (source: <http://popupcity.net/nike-launches-on-demand-laser-beam-street-football-pitch/>)
- 3) high tech: San Jose led light under passage (source: <http://www.metroactive.com/features/columns/illuminating-downtown-led-lights-san-jose.html>)

I can thus sum up the ambitions of SURD on the following levels:

The main added value of SURD is its integral and interdisciplinary approach to urban development. This approach is based on the fact that the urban context is complex and dynamic (environmental, social, cultural, spatial, economic, physical).

Thus, the ambitions of SURD can be highlighted on several levels:

a. Research

SURD aims to develop an interdisciplinary research that integrates innovative urban design and spatial planning strategies with building renovation concepts and new technologies to achieve regenerative urban metabolism (RUM)⁶. Thus, the research projects are developed in partnership with other research centers at Zuyd, other Universities and local stakeholders.

b. Education - Interdisciplinary and Experimental

The main objective of Zudy and consequently SURD is to develop professionals (the Engineer of the future) with knowledge and skills relevant to the current and future societal challenges in Limburg. Thus SURD research projects will be directly planned and integrated in the education program for BBE and other Zuyd education programs. One of the important skills that SURD will facilitate for the formation of the Engineer of the Future, besides technical skills, is working together in integral and interdisciplinary projects. Eg. the case of Kerkrade West that is developed as witnessed in Herwin Sap and Maud Hansen's presentation between BBE students and other students from other faculties at Zuyd. Limburg Action Lab (LAL).

c. Region

SURD's ambition is to contribute to the definition and development of the future identity of the Limburg region by improving livability, life quality and wellbeing in neighborhoods using technical and non-technical solutions. This can be achieved by developing integral projects and design strategies (on product, building and neighborhood scales) that can be implemented and tested in pilot locations in Limburg. It is hoped such projects will improve energy production and distribution systems, that consequently facilitate healthy life style, social innovation and economic development.

5

SURD Position

The knowledge domain is consistent with other priorities of Zuyd. The research center contributes to the development of suitably trained staff with the rapidly changing building construction industry now and in the future. It connects also to the regional economic priorities (Brightlands Campuses). The research group looks forward to working closely with regional and local stakeholders such as the Province, Parsktad Limburg, IBA, the municipalities, housing corporates, industry and the community.

a. Region

SURD is strongly connected to the Brightlands economic agenda in two ways. On the one hand SURD helps to create the necessary environment to connect people to this region (a valuable asset in reaching the defined economical goals) by working on an attractive, livable and healthy urban environment. On the other hand SURD connects with the themes defined in the Brightlands agenda on health and materials, and energy via the collaboration with the Bèta and Zuyd research centers that have assimilated the Brightlands themes as their research DNA.

b. Connection to Bèta Research Centers

Our research ambition can be an umbrella that strengthens the technology vision and strategic research topics within the Bèta Faculty with regard to the challenges in health, and sustainable energy, with an important role for smart materials, production and services for a functional, attractive and sustainable design of the built environment.

SURD collaborates with the Materials Science Research Center chaired by dr. Gino Van Strijdonck, with particular involvement in the research around coating materials for the improvement of photo-voltaic panel performance, the use of 3D printing in the construction sector. SURD is also involved with the Smart Devices Research Center chaired by dr.ir. Gabrielle Tuijthof in the research concerning wellbeing, care and liveability in the built environment, and cooperates as well with the Special Research Center Nanostructured Material chaired by dr. Pascal Buskens, via the subject materials for sustainable built environment and energy component (for collaboration with other research themes/centers) (See figs. 2,3,4).

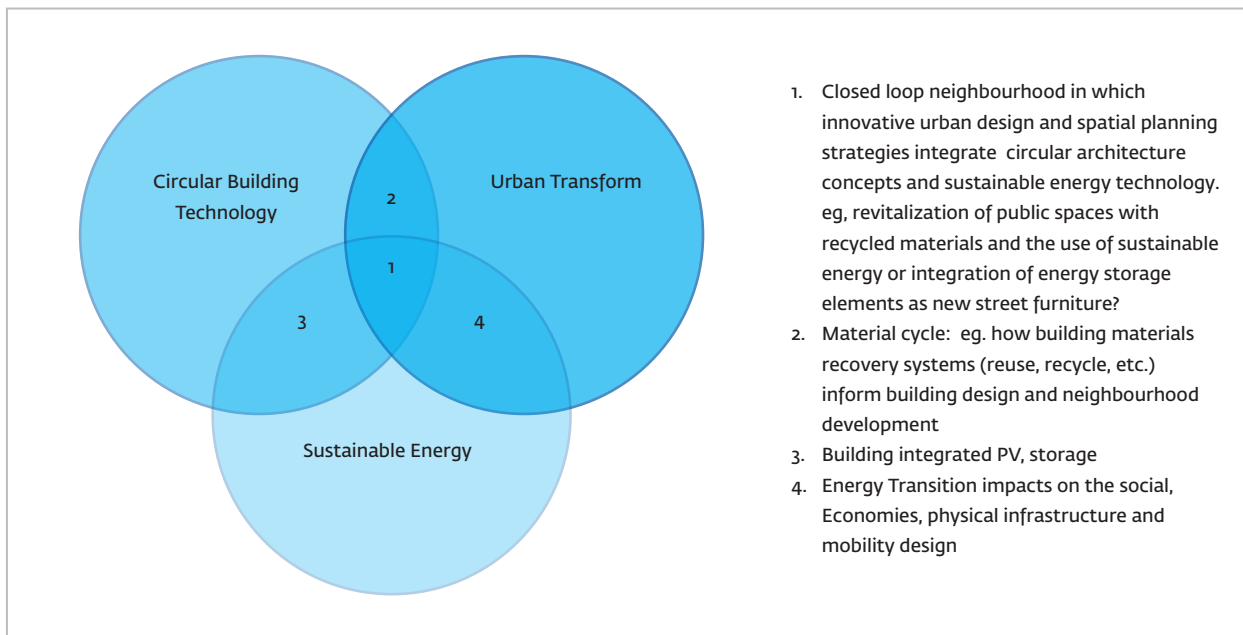


Fig. 2 | SURD research lines possible crossovers and integral themes

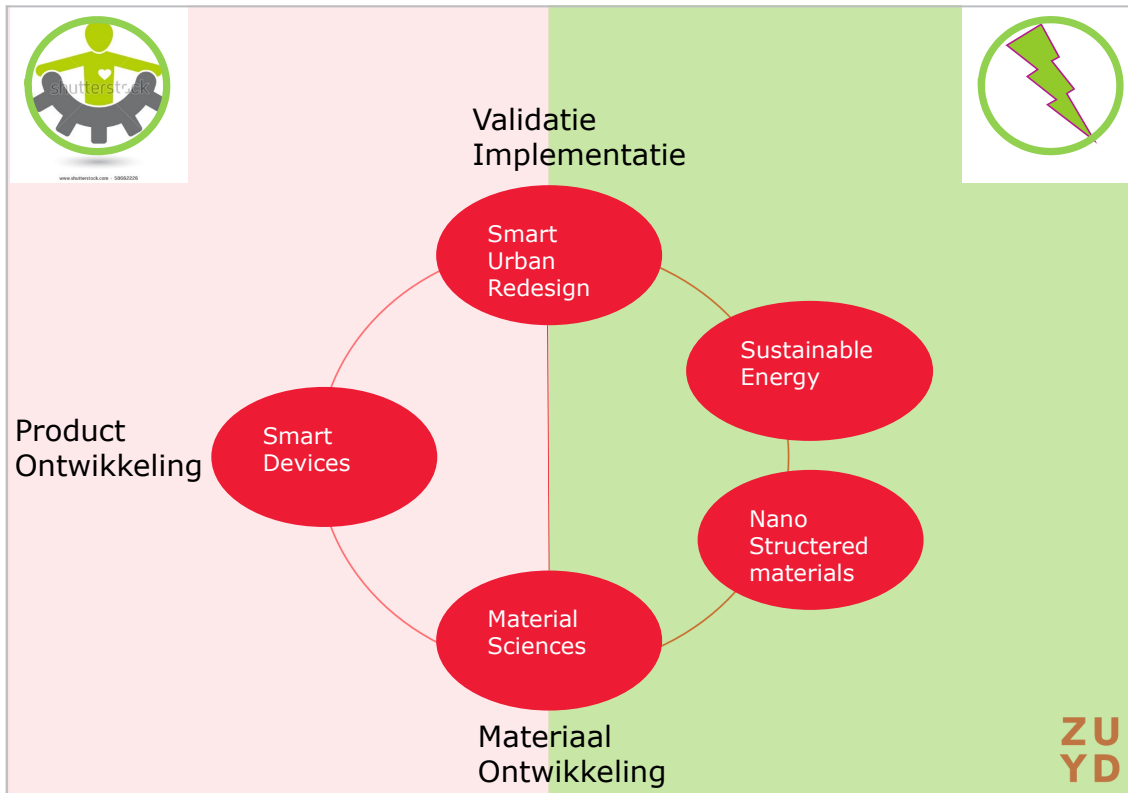


Fig. 3 | SURD Research Center in link to Bèta Faculty for Applied Science and Technology (Bèta Portfolio, Sep.2017)

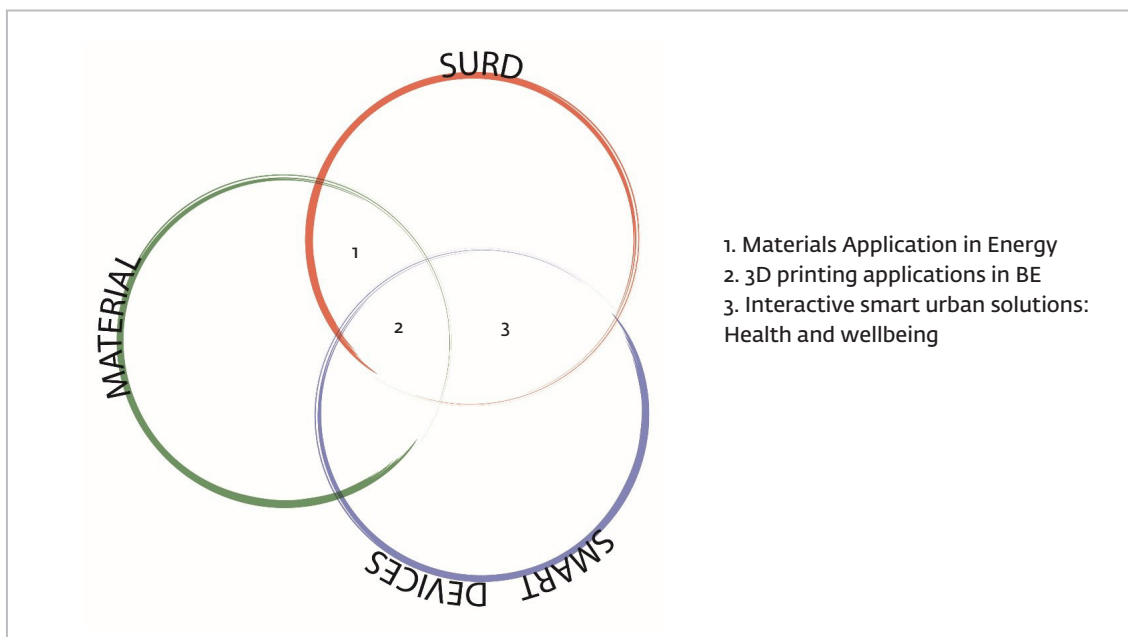


Fig. 4 | Research Center in link to Bèta Faculty for Applied Science and Technology - highlighting research overlaps and thematic cross-overs

Thus, the refinement of the integral themes that capitalizes on the synergies between Bêta's three research centers via a value chain is foreseen (See fig. 5).

c. Zuyd Research Centers

SURD collaborates with other research centers on several research themes. For example the Urban transformation line, together with dr.van Rossum, dr. van Duren and dr. Potting, is developing a research program called op weg naar vitaal regio. A programme that is closely linked to the Brightlands, Parkstad and Limburg Province agendas programme on vitality, wellbeing and social innovation (See fig.6).

SURD contributes to the interdisciplinary programme for revitalization of the region on themes7:

- Theme 1: Integrated Neighborhood Renewal: This includes issues dealing with shrinkage, vacancy, redeployment, preservation, mobility issues, from space to place; In short, integral neighborhood renewal projects in Limburg that help keep the built environment, living, moving, recreating, meeting, working, relaxing, facilitating the built environment.
- Theme 2: Vital neighborhoods: Concepts on livability, social inclusion, social innovation, sustainability, and wellbeing.

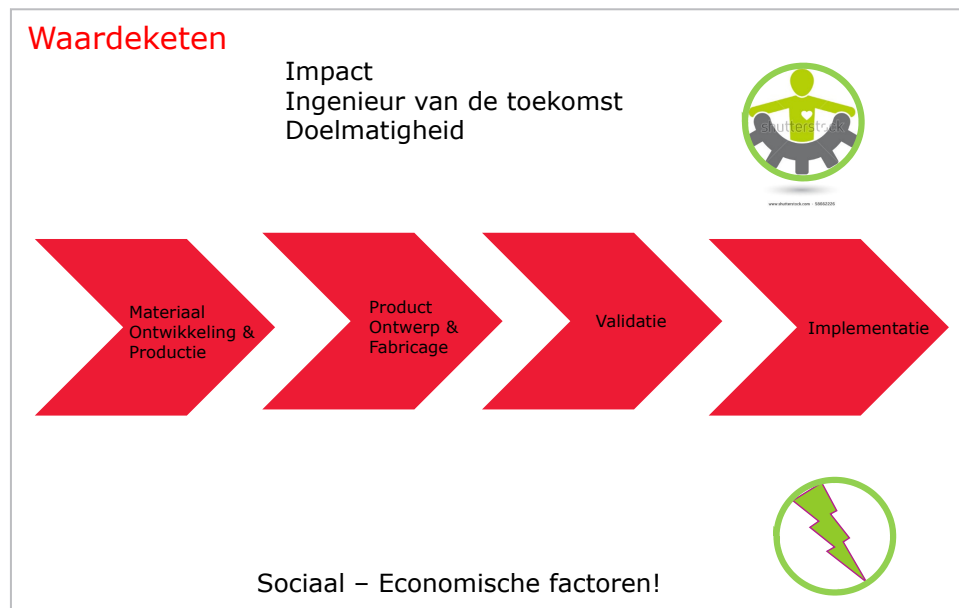


Fig. 5 | Bêta faculty for Science and Technology research Value Chain

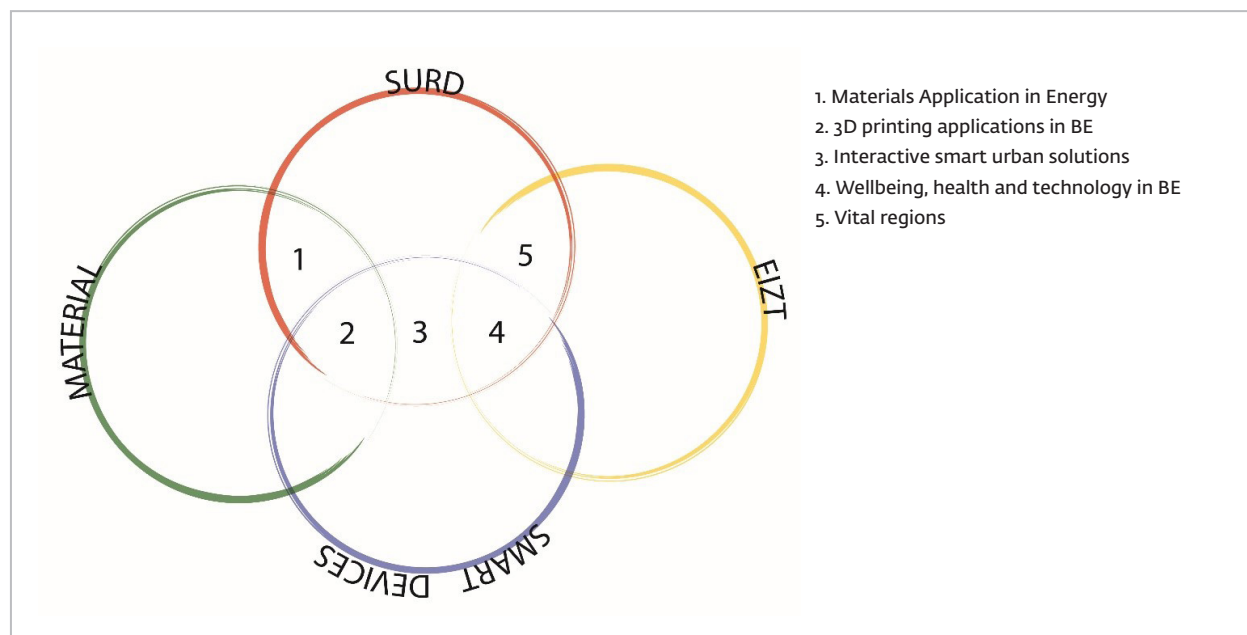


Fig. 6 | SURD research center in to links to other research centers in Bêta & Zuyd

6

Conclusions

I would like to conclude and leave you with the following message.

- Any act of design (product, architectural, urban) is a social act; it is about people and end users with whom the design/development process should start and end with.
- I really do believe in an integral approach to successful urban transformation. In a context like Limburg, any urban development effort needs to have a clear and integral vision of the future of the region. Such a vision should be developed in collaboration and in dialogue with all the relevant stakeholders, where the community voices and opinions should be strongly present.
- The power of knowledge can be best exploited to its maximum impact when synergic relations can be established. Thus, interdisciplinary research and education are essential in the formation of the engineer of the future. Combining technology and design will have better impact on the built environment, enabling people to feel accepted, acknowledged, to help them connect better with each another, to live, heal and thrive.

Here is fully hoping that the Smart Urban Redesign research agenda and its sustainably built environment team, together with our partners, will be able to make a meaningful contribution to Limburg and its people.

Acknowledgments

Ladies and gentlemen,

Developing a professional and academic experience requires an open heart and mind to others's contribution, opinion and constructive critique. Discovering and finding synergy and common grounds with others is a rich learning experience on both personal and professional levels.

Therefore, I would like to express my gratitude to those who made my long and challenging journey so exciting. Obviously I cannot include everyone I owe my thanks to in this limited period of time so please accept my apologies in advance.

First of all I want to thank Executive Board (College van Bestuur) of Zuyd Hogeschool, the director of Bèta Faculty for Applied sciences and Technology Bert Schroën for placing your trust and confidence in my abilities to lead the research center Smart Urban Redesign.

I thank my colleagues speakers who made the effort to actively participate in this ceremony: Prof. Corijn, Gerard Roemers, Maud Hensen, Herwin Sap, Zeger Vroon, Bert Schroen and our beloved students.

Prof. Hamdan Taha, Ali Ziade and Nadia Habash
Thanks for taking me to see Palestine in different eyes and perspective. For teaching me that among the ruins and misery of marginalized neighborhoods lies an opportunity. As well as for engaging me in very young age in projects that taught me the importance of architecture and archaeology as a tool for cultural resistance and emancipation.

Prof. Han Verschuren and prof. Jef Van den Broek

I really appreciate your full support to investigate Colonial Urbanism and Architecture of resistance; a topic that is not a typical theme in the department of architecture. This has established the first stone in my academic career. The research was highly relevant and marked me as an expert in this topic on international level.

Prof. Eric Corijn, dear Eric

From our first encounter you were fascinated by my research profile and challenged me to go one step further. You opened the door wide for me to grow, learn and experiment with your multidisciplinary COSMOPOILIS team and learn the importance of integral approach to urban development.

Prof. Jose Antonio Turegano

Thanks a lot for adopting me in your team and family when I was not sure about my future in Spain. Your faith in my talents and experience helped me explore other disciplines, challenges and also share good times with your interesting international and Spanish community.

Thanks to my Spanish friends and Colleagues, Angel Comeras, Encarna Gomez, Nuria Cadena, Ana Perez, Ferdous Elbahi, Rodirigo vidal, Leonardo Agurto and Carmen Gascon. Your continuous support made my short journey in Spain tolerant, full of colors and fun.

Thanks to prof. Bruno De Meulder, prof. Hilde Heynen and prof. Maarten Loopmans for the nonstop support in all my career endeavors.

Thanks to my KULeuven colleagues and friends; Ismael Sheikh Hassan, Yehya Serag, Ahmed Zaib Kahn, Loris Servillo, Abed Kittana, Alessandra Gola, Razan Khalaf, Shahinaz Najjar, Cecilia Furlan and many others for the interesting debates and good times.

Thanks to my VUB colleagues and Friends;
Zahra Zawawi, Mahan Najjar, Kim vander Borgth,
Jessica, Sofie, Effe, Benidikte, Seppe, and Els.

Thanks to all my students and PhD researchers, I learned a lot from you I hope you had the same opportunity with me.

Thanks to my Zuyd and Bèta lectoren, special thanks to Zeger Vroon for the interesting partnership we are building together in SURD. Thanks to Gabrielle, for keeping my enthusiasm and for your good friendship.

To my Zuyd Colleagues and my SBE team, for tolerating my enormous passion and enthusiasm. I hope I don't drive you crazy.

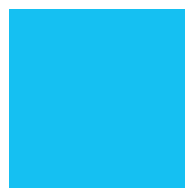
I thank my parents (Yusef and Amne), who believed in the importance of education in empowering communities especially women. With your limited resources during war time you gave your eight children lots of love and support to grow and have a good life and career. I hope I made you proud.

To my sisters and brothers, thanks for your unconditional love and continuous support.

To my family, my beloved husband Nouredin and my gorgeous children Amine and Iina. Thanks for tolerating my crazy passion and drive to make a difference. I Love you and I hope I make you proud.

I thank also Nicole Franssen, Nancy Kleijnen, Herwin Sap, Nicole Theunissen, Jeroen Veen and Maurice Derije for their help in organizing this event. Thanks to Michiel Ritzen for his feedback on the inaugurale Rede.

"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts." (Winston S. Churchill)



Curriculum Vitae

Nurhan Abujidi is a graduate from School of Architecture at Bir Zeit University in 1996. She worked as the chief architect for the Palestinian Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage from 1996 to 2000. She received two post graduate master degrees from the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium (one in conservation of historic towns and buildings, and the other in the architecture of human settlement). In 2007 she received her PhD from the department of architecture, regional and urban planning at KULeuven.

She taught (in graduate programs and international post graduate Master programs)in several universities and with different research groups such as at COSMOPOLIS; City , Culture and Society at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. She was the academic coordinator of the Erasmus Mundus UII urban studies module at the VUB Brussels. Worked as a senior researcher at Zaragoza university on the concept sustainable development. Guiding several Ph.D research projects.

She was the co-director of the school of architecture at San Jorge university where she was directing research and was the professor of URBAN design theory and studios.

Parallel to academia Nurhan is very active in social and cultural debates . She founded a socio-cultural association 'Mujeres del Mundo en Aragon' that tackles issues of immigrants and women in the city's public domain. She organized several cultural activities to discuss those themes. She organized an international photographic competitions and was the curator of the exhibition 'City, Culture and Identity; visions 'that discusses different visions and perspectives of the city and its cultural landscape.



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Fig source

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End notes

- 1 relatively low birth rates and high death rates, decreasing household size and economically driven selective out-migration. declining and aging population and low representation of youth (271.000 inhabitants in 1997 --> 235.000 inhabitants in 2020 --> 220.00 in 2040).
- 2 In the city-region of Parkstad/Limburg the overcapacity of house generates a mismatch between demand and supply, and the decay of many houses makes it hard to sell a house as a going concern. In the city-region of Parkstad/Limburg this phenomenon has seen the growth of an average vacancy rate of 5.2% (PARKSTAD LIMBURG 2009, in Elzerman and Bontje 2015).
- 3 See PBL, Netherlands environment assessment agency report on Cities in Europe , <http://agendastad.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/rapport-cities-in-europe-cities-in-the-netherlands.pdf> see also <http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/National-Report-Europe-Netherlands-Final-in-English.pdf>. Other relevant reports *The Future of the City Quality without Growth (2014)* also *Perspectief voor de steden: adviezen voor de agenda van de stad (2014)*
- 4 www.wijkvanmorgen.nl
- 5 Placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value. More than just promoting better urban design, Placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution. UNHABITAT,(2016), Global Public Space Toolkit: From Global Principles to Local Policies and Practice
- 6 (materials in the built environment and building envelop, sustainable energy, places and people).
- 7 Abujidi, Bosman, Duren, Potting, van Rossum, ' Op Weg naar vitaal regio', Voorstel aan GCU Stuurgroep, interfacultaire samenwerking 2017 – 2018: Built Environment Facility Management, Kunsten, Social Work, Gezondheidszorg.

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Colophon

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