Because some of us may be the impression we can do a lot more... of course, but this implies imposing things, and in this case, to impose research, to impose good design, interesting questions, and to define finally what is good and what is bad... and then, you have broken the model which has made us so successful and that not all the other international associations envy.

And it is very difficult to be simple perhaps because humankind has the tendency to believe that it is not, it doesn’t exist.

I used to teach my students, the most difficult thing to do when you are a manager is to delegate... is it a joke? Of course, not... because you always have the feeling you could do better... and sometimes, it is true, so true. You take the work of your neighbour and you put polish on it and you have done better. You must try to resist doing so, because next time, your neighbour will not do anything.

Cumulus is a network whose strategy is to help you contribute and to work together. Let us grow, let us be the most important network for design education. Continue what we have undertaken together. This is our strategy. The same strategy as Facebook, as Twitter.

I want to thank you for coming to Melbourne, I warmly thank the members of the Board, we had a very productive meeting yesterday, we are preparing the Green registration of the globalisation of Cumulus. What you have done is great, it was good, it was instructive, it was friendly, it was warming... It was Cumulus.

Christian Guellerin
Director General Nantes Atlantique
President of Cumulus

I received a strange question yesterday. What is your strategy for Cumulus? It is a very strange question because the answer is obvious to me.

Where are we heading? It is very clear for the members of the Board, it has to be very clear for all the members. Cumulus wants to be the most important association of design education, art and media in the world. Nothing more, nothing less, and we are on the way to achieving it.

We are a body of 150 institutions, universities and colleges, and as I already said, we will probably reach 170 members for the next General Assembly in Genk in May 2010. We promoted recently the network in the US, Korea, China and now in Australia and we are continuing to grow.

What is the strategy to achieve this goal? It is the most simple strategy imaginable. We are based on a very successful economical model, the model of Facebook, the model of Wikipedia, the model of Twitter. The model of Internet: the model of contribution. You want to participate, you want to share, you want to learn, you participate, you share, you learn... If you don’t want to do it, you don’t have to. You share, you learn what you want, when you want, how you want.

Cumulus is a platform for networking. We let institutions organise what they want, promote their own strategy of development, like in Melbourne, and affirm their experience of research. They propose their own programme and they invite members to participate and to debate. The General Secretary is careful to leave time and room for sub-groups, coffee-breaks and networking. It was remarkable in Melbourne. We had plenty of time to talk, to exchange greetings, questions and business cards and to debate. We had plenty of time to exchange moments of emotion and happiness.

As I told you it is the simplest strategy... and as it is so simple, it is very complicated to achieve.

As the teacher of Management I once was, I can tell you that sometimes the most simple thing is very complicated to put in order.

So how does one come to an understanding of disciplines? One could consider them as macro-theories about how one understands the world and one’s place in it. But not theory with a capital-T, rather theory as anthropologist Alan Barnard describes it as a set of questions, assumptions, methods, and evidence. QAM binds the disciplines together and lets them answer these questions. Barnard’s idea of the theory QAM allows us engage in a conversation of what are the questions of design, anthropology, engineering, or business; what are the assumptions that each discipline brings to the table, how does each discipline approach answering its questions, and what does it use to communicate to others as evidence or proof. Defining theory within a flexible framework of QAMX enables both academics and practitioners between, across, and beyond disciplines to discuss the similarities and differences in how they build and utilize knowledge.
In any introductory anthropology textbook, it states that the fundamental question of anthropology is “What does it mean to be human?” The anthropologist investigates the question from a variety of perspectives: from the distant past in archaeology to the near future in socio-cultural anthropology and from human biological diversity in physical anthropology to the symbolic diversity of languages in linguistics. The meaning of that humanness evolves over time, but the field encompasses the breadth and depth of exploration of the human condition.

Methodologically, anthropology especially cultural anthropology prefers participant-observation, which directly ties into anthropology’s assumptions about the need to be “present” to experience phenomenon. In participant-observation, the anthropologist herself is the instrument of data collection. It asserts that to know the range of human experiences one must empathetically experience it.

This leads to further assumptions of how experience needs to be recorded and compared across time and space and, as close as possible, from the perspective of the phenomenon studied. Why? Because greater exposure to human experience means greater understanding of what is true. In its most humanist form, anthropology is concerned with what is “unique in human experience” whether it comes from the interpretation of “texts” or the direct sensing of the reality of common human feelings.

So the query of anthropology is the question: What does it mean to be human? Its assumptions are empiricist, its methods are participant-observation, and its evidence is the ethnographic monograph, the story of the anthropologist’s experience from the perspective of the people studied. This is different from the querying of design.

Part 02: Design

Zoe, now a designer, begins to try out the cocktail umbrella. She doesn’t like the way it moves and throws it down. She takes a thinking pose to think about the right umbrella.

While the anthropologist asks, what does it mean to be human? The primary question of the designer in practice is “How do I create successful artifacts, communications, and experiences?” While the definition of success is open (in the terms of success for whom, under what circumstances, with what materials), the fundamental question of design in practice remains how the use of, for example as Steven Heller describes in graphic design, “practical theories of color, perception, and symbolism” inform greater commercial or personal design success.

The main assumption of the designer is that she works to intuit what would be successful. Her ability to correctly conceptualize grounds her in the philosophical rationalist tradition. Philosophical rationalism is defined by the Descartes’ idea, “I think therefore I am.”

She puts it down and takes another thinking pose, in which the “lady” concept, Britney, slowly makes her way to Zoe. Zoe the designer plays with the lady umbrella and finds it limited as well. She puts it down and takes another thinking pose, maybe miming umbrella movement gestures as the “bold” umbrella, Thom, slowly makes his way to Zoe. Zoe explores its form.

To aid in the process, the designer’s preferred method is visual research. Being there is a mediated experience through the collection and organization of visual artifacts. In most cases, these artifacts are then categorized according to formal design elements of color, line, shape, value or tone, texture, form, and material. The visual research processes of documentation and arrangement serve to inspire creativity, distill a visual vernacular, and/or identify gaps in the visual landscape for competitive advantage. This focus on artifacts allows the designer to make interpretations without interference from alternative contextual meanings.

Zoe the designer is less frustrated with the bold umbrella, but she stills discards it. She thinks about what she really wants from the umbrella as the white umbrella, which makes its way over to her from Britney. She explores its form, seemingly satisfied.

In design practice, there are tremendous variations in genres of evidence depending on the category of design. One thing that they all have in common is that there is a separation between the design of the artifact and its manufacturing. The artifacts of designing are not the end products, but rather the prototypical representations of the product.
In any introductory anthropology textbook, it states that the fundamental question of anthropology is “What does it mean to be human?” The anthropologist investigates that question from a variety of perspectives: from the distant past in archaeology to the near future in socio-cultural anthropology and from human biological diversity in physical anthropology to the symbolic diversity of languages in linguistics. The meaning of human-ness evolves over time, but the breadth and depth of exploration of the human condition.

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From that question of what it means to be human, one can explore the assumptions of Anthropology. Philosophically, the anthropologist tends to be grounded in an empiricist tradition, where to quote Alan Barnard we come “…to understand what is true based on what we are exposed to”. Thus, one has to yield to what you see, smell, taste, hear, and feel to know the world. In its most positivist form, anthropology concerns itself with how the quality of the recording of experience affects our knowledge of human experience.

Zoe mimes trying to record what the dancers are doing. She is frustrated that she cannot learn it from recording it.

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The princess of the tribe, Britney, gives Zoe the umbrella as a mark of having learned about the tribe. Zoe does the dance alone with the umbrella to show she has captured it.

The first “gothic” thought/concept, Jared, works his way towards Zoe, the designer and hands her the gothic umbrella. She moves the umbrella around, but gets frustrated because the umbrella is too heavy. She puts it down and takes another thinking pose, in which the “lady” umbrella, Thom, slowly makes her way to Zoe. Zoe the designer plays with the lady umbrella and finds it limited as well. She puts it down and takes another thinking pose, maybe missing umbrella movement gestures as the “bold” umbrella. Thom, slowly makes his way to Zoe. Zoe explores its form.

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Part 03 Design Research

The players see the pink umbrellas. They jump up and down individually trying to reach them.

Design research, as defined by the Society for Design Research, has as its fundamental question, “What is the process of designing in all its many fields?” The question is explored through either the emphasis on design methods, exemplified in the work of John Chris Jones or Brenda Laurel, or on design epistemology or ways of knowing, exemplified in the work of Nigel Cross and Bryan Lawson. As such, the questions of design research are not those of how people make sense of their world, but rather how designers make sense of their world.

Ahh…success. The evidence of success in design is the granting of awards based on those prototypes or artifact, its assumptions are rationalist, its methods are visual research, and its evidence is a prototype.

Part 02.5 Transdisciplinary transitions

Transdisciplinary... that which is between, across and beyond all disciplines. Transdisciplinary... as described by Basarab Nicolescu, “Its goal is the understanding of knowledge and understanding. While anthropology and design represent single disciplines, design research and design anthropology represent fields that are between, across, and beyond disciplines. They are the remix of questions, assumptions, methods, and evidence that leads to new forms of knowledge and understanding.

Zoe does her piece for a minutes. The other players remove their masks and prepare for the next section of the piece. They possibly engage with the audience.

Dori starts the audience clapping.

Abhh. success. The evidence of success in design is the granting of awards based on those prototypes or their final mass reproduction. To summarize, the game of design is the question how do I design a successful artifact, its assumptions are rationalist, its methods are visual research, and its evidence is a prototype.

Part 04 Design Anthropology

The players line up in the front of the stage.

Now we come to design anthropology as a trans-disciplinary praxis. It takes the fundamental question of anthropology and places it within a framework to inform design research and design practice: “How do the processes and artifacts of design come to help define what it means to be human?” Design anthropology reorients the focus design research and design practice from what designing is to what is designing’s social, cultural, and environmental impact. How people change in relationship to design.

They open up their costumes to reveal their colors. They open up their umbrellas and begin the dance with their matching umbrellas.

As a hybridization of design and anthropology design anthropology adopts the empiricist stance from anthropology but remains open to the rationalism of design. There is a bias towards empiricism that is tempered by pragmatism, and propelled by an ethical stance towards a critical understanding design’s wider ramifications. Because the criteria of engagement is not success but rather unknown, resulting insights can lead to strategic prohibitions as much as strategic solutions.
Ahhh…success. The evidence of success in design is Transdisciplinarity…that which is between, across and visual research, and its evidence is a prototype.

Zoe does her piece for 2 minutes. The other players re-piece. They possibly engage with the audience.

Abhh. success: The evidence of success in design is the granting of awards based on those prototypes or their final mass reproduction. To summarize, the game of design is the question how do I design a successful artifact, its assumptions are rationalist, its methods are visual research, and its evidence is a prototype.

Part 02.5 Transdisciplinary transitions

Transdisciplinarity… that which is between, across and beyond all disciplines Transdisciplinarity… as described by Basarab Nicolescu, “its goal is the understanding of beyond all disciplines. Transdiscilinarity…as described the unity of knowledge.”

Thom and Britney and Jared and Zoe pair up. Thom and Britney first try to stand on one top of another’s backs to reach the umbrella. Jared and Zoe watch and then imitate them, and reach a little higher. Jared and Zoe climb and sit piggy back to reach. Thom and Britney watch and imitate getting a little closer.

As a trans-disciplinary field, design research’s epistemological assumptions range across stances of rationalism or empiricism, mostly often landing in pragmatism. Charles S. Peirce explains the pragmatist position, which does not attribute any different essential mode of being to an event in the future or the past, but only has two different practical attitudes. Neither does it take Forms to be the only realities in the world or the reasonable purport of a word to be the only kind of meaning there is.

Thom and Britney climb and sit on one another’s shoulders to reach the umbrella. Jared and Zoe watch and then imitate them, and reach a little higher. Jared and Zoe stand on each other’s shoulders. Thom and Britney watch and imitate.

Design research uses a variety of exploratory, generative, and evaluative methods depending on the discipline from which the researcher hails. Research that seeks to understand design’s ways of thinking tends to adopt philosophical, historical, experimental and cognitive psychological methods. Research that seeks to inform the design process tends to draw upon cognitive observational, and performative methods.

Thom and Britney lift each other to reach the umbrellas. Then Jared and Zoe. They each get closer and closer.

Defining the evidence for design research is extremely difficult. In fact, the only commonality is the importance of the verbal presentation — either in the form of lectures, conferences, or client presentation. So how is it that design research, whose subject is based on the visual forms, has as its evidence an aural form? Because, the design research endeavor, in all its diversity, only shares at its core the presentational structure of design knowledge in the form of research goals, methods, and outcomes.

The player teams successfully reach the umbrellas and celebrate.

In the game of design research, the question is what is the process of designing in its many fields, its assumptions are pragmatist in nature, its methods vary depending on the researcher’s centered field, and its evidence is the verbal performance of knowledge.

Part 03 Design Research

The players see the pink umbrellas. They jump up and down individually trying to reach them.

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The players have moved to the back of the stage.

Dori starts the audience clapping.

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Thom and Britney watch and then imitate them. They possibly engage with the audience.

They open up their costumes to reveal their colors. They open up their umbrellas and begin the dance with their matching umbrellas.

As a result, design and anthropology design anthropologists adopt the empiricist stance from anthropology but remains open to the rationalism of design. There is a bias towards empiricism that is tempered by pragmatism, and propelled by an ethical stance towards a critical understanding design’s wider ramifications. Because the criteria of engagement is not success but rather unknown, resulting insights can lead to strategic prohibitions as much as strategic solutions.

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The players continue to dance with the umbrellas, breaking out to do their own things.

They move in pairs to dance with umbrellas. They run around.

The design anthropologist uses a variety of methodological approaches to answer her questions about how designing affects people and their environments. The two preferred methods that emerged out of places like E-lab and Doblin are the in-context interview and visual story. The in-context interview reinforces the anthropological assumption that the researcher needs to be there in order to experience the phenomenon studied. Multiple researchers immerse themselves not to just understand about design artifacts and how they are used, but also deeply about the people who use them. Visual stories are a way to be there when the researcher cannot be there physically. People are sent a booklet with questions and a digital camera, video
The evidence of understanding is represented through the experience model as pioneered by American firms such as Doblin and E-Lab. The experience model is designed to work together, are a rich resource for design and design education need to see their activities, attitudes, artifacts, environments, people, and processes. The researcher is then allowed to "be present" without being present, but it is the subject's own language, perspectives, and choices about values that is documented, not that of the design anthropologist or anthrodesigner.

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Conclusion
Transdisciplinarity...that which is between, across and beyond all disciplines. Transdisciplinarity... as described by Basarab Nicolescu, "Its goal is the understanding of the present world, of which one of the imperatives is the unity of knowledge."

As an anthropologist in the field of design, my work has always been transdisciplinary. It is probably the evidence of my being to work between, across, and beyond all disciplines. I hope that it becomes the essence of your work as well. Thank you.

Applause.

I like to thank my collaborators, the A4 Circus Ensemble: The artistic director of the performance and contortionist, Thomas Worrell; foot juggler, Zoe Robbins; contortionist, Britney Portelli; and contortionist, Jared Wright.

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