

Design as a Hybrid Driver of Research

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In Europe, the development of doctoral scholarship in architecture has revealed three types of approach: “conservative”, “pragmatic” and “liberal” (Gillies, cited from Kälveborn and interpreted by: Dunin-Woyseth 2005, 85-86, 99).

“Architectural research is original investigation undertaken in order to generate knowledge, insights and understanding based on competencies, methods and tools proper to the discipline of architecture. It has its own particular knowledge base, mode, scope, tactics and strategies.” This is stated in the *Charter on Architectural Research*, approved by the General Assembly of the European Association for Architectural Education (EAAE) on the 3rd of September 2012. Research by design is exposed there as: “Any kind of inquiry in which design is the substantial constituent of the research process is referred to as research by design.”

In *The Florence Principles on the Doctorate in the Arts*, (2016) and *The Vienna Declaration on Artistic Research* (2020), developed by the European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA) and supported by other relevant networks, architectural and design research are recognized in the area of arts, where the pragmatic and especially the liberal approaches are developed. “Artistic Research (AR) is practice-based, practice-led research in the arts...”

Practice-based research can be primarily imagined as “field”, while research through design can be defined as “lab” (for the explanation of “lab”, “field” and “showroom” in design research through practice see: Koskinen et.al. 2011). Practice-based research in architecture can combine both. The third practice-based research mode is the “showroom”; the hypothetical designs, in this case, grow beyond the limited “lab” options; as the complexity of reality is taken more than seriously. This doesn’t mean that specific questions don’t require the “lab” circumstances to be answered, but the awareness of “lab” isolation needs to be enhanced (Zupančič 2013).

The University of Ljubljana is active in the EAAE, ELIA and ARENA debate through its different members. The Faculty of Architecture is currently one of the 26 members of the University of Ljubljana (academies and faculties). Its research tradition is developed from the sensitivity to delicate and even fragile places of our contemporary architectural and urban environments. The architectural culture in Slovenia reflects the small-scale hybrid landscapes of settlements with a very high level of vulnerability of places, due to both natural and cultural spatial dynamics. The architectural and design research culture is thus hybrid and inclusive, open and flexible to a wide variety of design-driven research approaches. It integrates arts and humanities (architectural design theory and practice), social sciences (urban design theory and practice) and technology (building technology, architectural computing). It takes the advantage of the institutional experience with:

- . Some traditional doctorates in urban design since 1938 and
- . A set of pragmatic ones in architecture since 1960,
- . Creative practice related doctorates since 1980,

- . A structured faculty-based doctoral program since 1984,
- . Some liberal examples of doctorates since 2000,
- . A renewed faculty-based doctoral program since 2009, where Architectural research by design is one of the orientation courses,
- . The partnership in the ADAPT-r ITN project 2013-16 (Architecture, Design and Art Practice Training-research),
- . The CA2RE network (Community for Artistic and Architectural Research), in association with ARENA, EAAE and ELIA, since 2017 and
- . The CA2RE+ project (Collective Evaluation of Design Driven Doctoral Training), since 2019.

It also builds on the established research ties between the Faculty of Architecture, the Academy of Fine Arts and Design, the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Social Sciences in Ljubljana. It brings environmental psychologists, philosophers, anthropologists, urban sociologists, geographers, experts in cultural studies, experts in human resource management, and other related experts into the discussion.

From this perspective, design-driven research is seen as an inclusive, open-ended, future-oriented research area. Its boundaries are blurred but its directionality is identifiable through relational knowledge development and sharing. (More about this relationality: Zupančič and Pederson 2017.) It can be theory and/or practice-based (-led, -rooted). When and where research is design-driven, thinking, feeling and acting are intertwined, calling for the freedom of hybrid research methods and sharing modes. Design-driven research is thus open to the experimentation “by design” and to the “creative practice research”, where and when relevant:

- . There are research questions in (the field of) design, that can be answered only by (through) design experimentation. We can shift to the experimental mode when we can formulate those questions. That (also) means:

- . “Not all creative practice is research.” (Del Vecchio and Zupančič 2017)

The creative practitioners may become researchers through their essential input and output knowledge creation, capable to develop relational knowledge, when they investigate their areas sensitively and rigorously, beyond the commercial success.

In design-driven research, new knowledge is created from theories and practices and represented by theoretical developments and methodological investigations. We can argue that research is design-driven, as long as we can recognize design as the main or as a supportive driver of research. Research can be design-driven from the problem statement motivation, approach (future orientation and open-ended-ness), method (analytical/interpretational methods, design experimentation in the studio or field-actions) and/or relevance (socio-spatial responsive design of objects, processes, systems; depending on knowledge transferability).

Oya Atalay Franck (2016) says: “The criteria for doctorateness in architectural design depend on the nature of the ‘doctoral thesis’ itself. But whatever the thesis primarily consists of —a report on empirical research, a philosophical reflection, a concrete architectural design project— a key aspect of ‘doctorateness’ will always be that the doctoral candidate demonstrates that he or she belongs to a professional élite and has excelled through doctoral work in specific, describable ways.” From the Ljubljana research perspective, we can add that a hybrid nature of research exists as well, where there are several directionalities intertwined and integrated potentially. The contents can be combined in different ways, but the wider contribution to cultural development is what creates its directionality.

In architectural design-driven research, the (Ljubljana) research community is seeking for the balance between theoretical and practical developments of individuals and research communities, blurring the boundaries between

theories and practices and between artistic and scientific understanding of research. Feeling that we need to fight for the position of artistic sensitivity and the dissemination modes, appropriate for artistic research, at the national level, we are in the process of accreditation of a new university-based doctoral program in the arts. In this process, design is seen as a hybrid driver of research.

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