

THE HOSPITAL OF THINKABLE BOUNDARIES

Noetic methods in architecture

Reflection Paper

Ragna Karin Emilia Jonasdóttir Nordström

Student no. 5384869

The relationships between research and design

The research follows my personal narrative of mental healing; from being stuck in the loop of eating disorders, which was for me grounded in a western configuration of thinking and measuring; to the liberation and reconciliation of ontological and epistemological perspectives which took place under multiple experiences of shamanistic therapeutics including the psychoactive substances of ayahuasca and psilocybin, experiences which have led to transformative healing. A healing process where I was able to abandon a life of despair and instead could welcome a life of joy. The research expands on the shamanic healing techniques and procedures trying to define one specific character which presented itself to me as essential and important. A character which I have described as *noetic*, where patterns of thought are liberated, visible and redefined while the body is clearly present. A sense of insight, a sort of embodied knowledge, where the mind and body react and exist in dialogue. Because of its material and immaterial relation, and because of its spatial character, I wanted to research *if* and *how* the notion of the noetic could be instrumentalized into methods and processes of design. Just as I had been able to methodize and integrate this dreamlike and vivid experience and manifest it into my memory and body as deeply meaningful and healing, perhaps it could reveal new intentions and give birth to new ways of working in the materialization of architecture? How can methods of design be articulated when healing is explored from noetic perspectives? These noetic methods could carry a sense of liberation, of possibility, of shifting the perspective, while responding to the material and immaterial context. Suggesting a layered system of healing situated in a personal and experiential narrative.

The relationship between your graduation project topic, studio topic (Explore Lab), your master track (A) and your master programme (Msc AUBs)

My graduation topic, noetic design and the composition of healing processes and environments, challenges preconceptions and prejudice about non-western approaches to life and the design of life. As a philosophical notion, naturally the resistance to materialize has been present throughout the project, from the lack of words to describe the experience, to the urge of the intellect to rationalize and categorize. The rationalization of the mind and its implications, how architecture as a commercial pursue becomes a question of economic interests and *time*. Somewhere along the way, the human body, the situated stories, are lost, especially the minor. This project then is about discovering tools and techniques in architecture that can be described as noetic. Those which departs from the bodily experience, which

rediscovers the body as agent, as mediator, as meaningful, as memory, while still recognizing the importance of the mind that is the narrative, the story, the personal. Changing ways of working with architecture, from intellectual to embodied, from dialectical to dialogical, from numerical to sensual, from hierarchical to ecological. Perhaps this graduation project can inspire the reader to *feel*, to embrace emotion and intuition.

Elaboration on research method and approach chosen by the student in relation to the graduation studio methodical line of inquiry, reflecting thereby upon the scientific relevance of the work

The research methods used, that of personal experience, the situated, the perspective of other organisms and contexts, were consciously chosen as a means of exploring non-traditional sources and research methods, with the intention to display knowledge ‘gaps’, spaces and realms which has not and cannot be explained in scientific terms. For me, this was and still is one of the main drivers for pursuing the research. To challenge my own way of thinking, my own prejudice, preconceived categories, and structures. Explore Lab exhibits this line of thinking and doing by literally being outside of the studio categories and contexts. The studio encourages and supports the research methods that I have experimented with, and the challenge has been to not let the studio’s philosophy down, i.e., by really bringing the project all the way back to a materialization, which has been difficult for multiple incidents and world events, such as a two-year pandemic followed by the anxiety of a disrupted European order. Yet, this is also the main driver for pursuing this project, that is *healing*. I hope my project can bring some peace into the anxious reality that we find ourselves in.

Elaboration on the relationship between the graduation project and the wider social, professional and scientific framework, touching upon the transferability of the project results

Spurred by the pandemic, mental health issues have reached a global high. Because of my personal experience of mental illness and of healing, I wondered if and how such an experience could be productive. The research on noetic healing emphasizes the body mind interaction, that is the dialogical relation of the immaterial and material which takes place in the patient, but the research also includes perspectives that considers healing ceremonial and collective with plant medicines that alters consciousness consumed in ritual settings. This notion of community and collectivity is something that is rarely observed or experienced in the individualistic western society. What I hope with this design project is to illustrate and depict a system of healing settings and techniques where such rituals can take place. At this point in the project, I have developed a clear method that concerns the body as mediator, architecture as process, and dialogue between the material and the immaterial context. I have a clear narrative of the process of healing, including the environments to inhabit the organic psychoactive compounds of ingestion as well as the settings in which the ceremonial collective therapeutics takes place. These are spaces and processes, which are novel to western medicine and thus can inform the scientific framework of architectures of health. Written personal statements of what will be taking place in these “stations” of healing, depicting the body experiencing space, materiality, light and color, but also the sensing of connection, safety, trust and love, constructs the program of the project. The final part of the graduation year, the weeks leading up to the P5, I will develop the project in terms of materiality, sensitivity and atmosphere in detail, physically: through the making of 1:50 section models and representationally; through the use of watercolor in hand drawing. And after P5, the aim is to continue on this research and realize this project into the world – even if it might take a bit of time.

What is the project about?

This project is an epistemological project, or rather an onto-epistemological one. It is precisely that, because it sets out to explore their intimate relation through pursuing a research in which other sources of knowledge and methods of calibration are acknowledged, investigated and experienced with open mind.

This project is a methodological project. It is precisely that because it seeks understand how these onto-epistemological relations produces certain systems of knowledges and pattern of thoughts and proceeds to transform these understandings and findings into a productive process of methods.

This project is a methodical project. It is precisely that because it questions standard methods of measuring and acquiring knowledge, both within the faculty of Architecture but also within a Western, post-industrial context.

This project is an ethical project. It is precisely that because it investigates and criticizes how laws, regulations, language and modes of production within the Western system of knowledge perpetually rejects, neglects and discriminate minor bodies, communities and organisms. This is precisely an ethical issue because of how it limits, suffocates and even eradicates their unique human and vegetal experience.

This project is a personal project. It is precisely that because it departs from an intimately personal experience of sickness and health. Sickness, where the edge of mortality reveals itself as determined and finite, that the face of existence refuses to be taken for granted. And health, where the bliss of vitality simply cannot pertain itself to cells of the body, but continues through every membrane of reality, indefinitely and infinitely. These are personal precisely because it elaborates on the universal themes of being, living and dying.

This project is a noetic project. It is precisely that because its main agenda is to overcome the binary opposition and hierarchies which separates the material and the immaterial context. It seeks to instrumentalize the perceptive and cognitive tool, that is the noetic, into methods of design and into the materialization of the built environment. It is precisely noetic because it seeks to open up rigid thinking and reveal prejudice, by representing other ways of seeing the world. It is precisely noetic because it considers material bodies: humans, organisms, objects and architectures, as sentient, sensual and intentional. This project is noetic because it emphasizes the situated, the personal, the lived, and considers these as materially meaningful.