

Architectural position

A design education to become an architect requires different methods than, for example, teaching pure science, or learning a craft. The education at the Delft University of Technology started with a set of given apparatus that followed existing design methods. Several courses taught us the fundamentals for conducting research, the essential tools for analysis, including a list of research topics. Simultaneously, massing studies and other drawing and modelling techniques appear which encourage the design education. This pre-knowledge is necessary for a designer to establish a strong design concept. Along the way, one skill themselves in the taught methodologies, adding it to his or her 'pallet of methodologies'. After graduation, one is titled 'Master of Science'. According to Jorge Meija Hernandez, to become a 'Master of Science', one should be skilled in the acquisition of knowledge, in our case architectural knowledge.¹ This knowledge is gained through research which underlines the importance of well-conducted research. As Lucas concludes in his book, architecture is a complex, multifaced field of study, meaning no single approach can tell you everything you need to know, which means that there are numerous possibilities to gain knowledge in the field. This interpretation underlies that there is no wrong or right approach to conduct research or to embark an assignment, as long as one is open and honest about the process and framework of the research.² However, there is still a specific part of conducting research in education which is underexposed, praxeological research.

This studio concerns the problem that 'a good city needs industry', highlighting that a productive city is a city where living and making take place side by side. It sounds so obvious, but everything we see around us is in one way or another created by us, humans. That is why this studio focusses on craft and craftsmanship, concerning it as the economic and social drivers of our cities. Whereas craft and craftsmanship, contribute to a genuine, circular economy as well as an excellent professional life for many. Additionally, we concern craft as a crucial necessity to create durable and purposeful architecture. Simultaneously, craft education in the Netherlands lacks recognition and its role in society deteriorated over time. Positioning this craft school in a given urban context, with the awareness of existing structures, its role in delineating private and public realm, scale and materials, we, either way, complete or re-direct a part of the city. The education-related programme will communicate its social role in the public realm and intervene in daily life.³ So how can a building create, promote and communicate the cultures of crafts and specific networks of people, places and knowledge? My research is based on the material ceramic and the craft of pottery.

¹ Jorge Meija Hernandez, "Heuristics", accessed May 9, 2020, <https://brightspace.tudelft.nl/d2l/le/content/192744/viewContent/1618566/View>.

² Ray Lucas. *Research Methods for Architecture* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2016), 21, ProQuest Ebrary.

³ Mechthild Stuhlmacher, "Urban Architecture", accessed May 3, 2020, <https://brightspace.tudelft.nl/d2l/le/content/247475/viewContent/1636314/View>.

The craft of pottery is partly context-led research which is characterised by schools and ateliers. This qualitative, etic research exhibits conditions, among other circumstances, but in similar environments following the same rules.⁴ Simultaneously, I engaged in the local craft of pottery outside the learning environment. This can be examined as fieldwork which is not directly related to a learning environment but additional to the practising of the to-be-taught craft. I tend to shift towards the more sensorial aspects of the production processes and the education of a specialised skill. Engaging with the craft of pottery, purely just watching it, activated all my senses and made me realise that this is a part of the research I want to engage in. According to Pallasmaa: "*Learning a skill is not primarily founded on verbal teaching but rather on the transference of a skill from the muscles of the teacher directly to the muscles of the apprentice through the act of sensory perception and bodily mimesis. ... The foremost skill of the architect is, likewise, to turn the multi-dimensional essence of the design task into embodied and lived sensations and images; eventually, the entire personality and body of the designer becomes the site of the design task, and the task is lived rather than understood.*"⁵. The vocational learning environment seeks for an activation of the senses.

I glorify Pallasmaa for his understanding that our existence is a sensuous and embodied mode of being, which is in its essence the foundation of existential knowledge.⁶ Additionally, Lucas mentions that how we build is informed by how we understand the world, and how we understand the world is framed by what we have built there.⁷ So to build something new, we have to understand the world, and we understand the world through our senses and our existential knowledge. On the ground of this theory, I analysed the project site through my senses and draw everything in a sensorial map through hand drawing, with my "eyes at the fingertips".⁸ This exploration of the site results in a site research including sensorial aspects as smell, touch, noise, as well as social and cultural activity and atmospheres. The novel challenge is to translate the results into design since it has no immediate aesthetic. One that speaks to the sense of the user (experiencer) as well as to the passers-by (observer), in order to complete or re-direct the urban context.

The long-established principle of praxeology rests on the understanding that people act, on the fact that individual's consciousness engages in goal-directed behaviour, which is in contrast with an automatic response. Based on Bourdeau's classification of praxeology in the field of sciences, Alfred Espinas was first to give it meaning in the field of economics in the late 19th century. The understanding that people engage in intentional behaviour, which is the logic of action, clearly suggest their preferences.⁹ Gradually, the '*study of activity*' developed in the 20th century within different branches, with different outcomes but the same beliefs. Simultaneously, architectural trends shift towards modernism, which gradually eliminates itself from praxeology by drifting away from the reality of daily human life.

⁴ Ray Lucas. *Research Methods for Architecture* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2016), 12, ProQuest Ebrary.

⁵ Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Thinking Hand : Existential and Embodied Wisdom in Architecture* (Chichester: Wiley, 2010), 15.

⁶ Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Thinking Hand : Existential and Embodied Wisdom in Architecture* (Chichester: Wiley, 2010), 13.

⁷ Ray Lucas. *Research Methods for Architecture* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2016), 8, ProQuest Ebrary.

⁸ Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Thinking Hand : Existential and Embodied Wisdom in Architecture* (Chichester: Wiley, 2010), 45.

⁹ Murray Newton Rothbard, "Praxeology: The Methodology of Austrian Economics." in *The Foundations of Modern Austrian Economics* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1976), n.p. [online].

In 1953, during the *Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM), Peter and Alison Smithson shared their understanding of urban re-identification. This search for a new research method, including intuitive spatial experience characterised the start of a change in modern architecture and urbanism. With at the centre of attention: the daily human life. Jane Jacobs is the first activist to criticise the absence of praxeology in modernist research and planning. 'Urban renewal does not respect the needs of city-dwellers.'¹⁰ She proclaims that the people are ignored, and human's behaviour is forced into an act rather than the city being part of a structure composed of people. Additionally, Jan Gehl reflects on modernism as an urbanistic ideology where the human dimension disappeared, which results in lifeless cities.¹¹ However, over the previous decades, praxeological research gained recognition from architects and urban planners as a research method. It communicates information about how people truly use the built environment. The research is mainly based on situational specifications and heuristic techniques including mapping, photography and documenting observations. Through praxeological research, designers gain information about users by studying human action and behaviour.¹² Therefore it is beneficial to map activities and paths of people on the given site, in order to re-direct it to the desired use.

In both praxeology and phenomenology is the use of space in the centre of attention. However, phenomenology focusses to a greater extent on the sensational senses such as bodily perception and memory. The exchange between humans and space is not merely limited to a visual connection as an observer. Phenomenology extends beyond the objects and transforms them into a spatial and bodily experience. As Juhani Pallasmaa states, all experienced space is multi-sensory; equally conceived by eye, nose, ear, skin, tongue, skeleton and muscle.¹³ Additionally, Klaske Havik emphasises this as "*Our perception and understanding does not process from details towards an entity, but the other way around: from entity to details*" (Havik, 2013).¹⁴ She claims that this immediate experience of the whole, through all our senses, is an essential aspect of atmosphere. This belief underlines the importance of phenomenological research in architectural discourse. However, Edmund Husserl is considered to be the founder of phenomenology as a methodology. In the beginning of the 20th century he describes it as a structure of consciousness, experienced without theoretical and metaphysical speculations, that extend beyond existing observational, psychical and psychological research.¹⁵ Gradually, phenomenology developed in the 20th century within different branches, with different outcomes but the same beliefs.

Architectural phenomenology had been missing from the architectural discourse since it is not considered an actual movement if there is no direct associated aesthetic. Even though its research sheds light on human experience, interpretation as well as historical and ethical aspects of space. This is an outcome of modernism, where scientific objectivity is the only truth. A subjective experience is not

¹⁰ Marieke Berkers, "Praxeology", accessed May 8, 2020, <https://brightspace.tudelft.nl/d2l/le/content/192744/viewContent/1622413/View>.

¹¹ Adriano Paranaíba, "Praxeology and Space Syntax: An epistemological articulation in favor of urban mobility as human action." in *Austrian Economics Research conference, Auburn, Alabama, USA, 2017*, n.p. [online].

¹² Marieke Berkers, "Praxeology", accessed May 8, 2020, <https://brightspace.tudelft.nl/d2l/le/content/192744/viewContent/1622413/View>.

¹³ Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 45, Google Books.

¹⁴ Klaske Maria Havik and Gus Tielens, "Atmosphere, Compassion and Embodied Experience: A Conversation About Atmosphere with Juhani Pallasmaa." *Oase*, no. 91 (2013): 37.

¹⁵ Rudolf Bernet, Iso Kern and Eduard Marbach, *Introduction to Husserlian phenomenology* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 63-64, Google Books.

reliable, as it only came into being from an individual derived from an intuitive and perceptive approach.¹⁶ Recently, praxeology and phenomenology are making headway in architectural discourse as a result of the revived interest in architectural perception, where atmosphere is highly valued. However, it is still a long shot for phenomenology, mapping atmospheres and perception, to be completely integrated and appreciated.¹⁷ During the lecture of Klaske Havik, she mentioned several times that most of us are probably not too familiar with the phenomenological methods she proposed. This remark clarified even more that this methodology is still highly undeveloped in current design education, probably still assumed as uncertain by many. Nevertheless, according to Pallasma this offers opportunities since most cherished works are produced by craft at risk, where risk indicates the uncertainty of advancing different paths.¹⁸ According to the urge of a new craft school, I believe that sensorial research into uncertain paths of the learning environment can stimulate development and innovations.

I believe that the interaction between people and space is the major challenge an architect has to design. It is not merely a building or a public space because everything is dwelled upon by people. This atmosphere that a skilled architect is capable of creating is the real translation of this interaction. However, architectural design struggles regarding the image-culture; it considered being a discipline of the eye, where 'starchitects' concentrate on form and designing icons.¹⁹ These computer-designed buildings are equal to architectural fiction, where a weightless, mathematical space constructs a distance between the object and the human.²⁰

Architecture as a discipline also encounters difficulties with research methods, because what is research in architecture? After all, Klaske Havik's talk inspired me most through the methods she proposed. Opening up new discussions on how to describe and plan our cities, not looking at them as places but as bodily experiences of each individual, experienced through one's soul.²¹ How to analyse the embodied experience of the world around us? The phenomenological discourse answers to this question, but not in a precise form of apparatus, which allows much exploration in the research field. In line with Lucas' consideration that architecture is a humanities discipline, the outcome is not one correct answer, just as there is no one correct method to conduct research.²² The material culture studies cover more context-led research where still the fundament is a sensorial aspect towards material and materiality. This understanding intensifies my belief that some of the inhumane structures and icons created can not relate to the scale of a human individual. Sometimes they are landing in the context like UFO's or architects try to distort materials into undefinable shapes, or ignoring their gravity.²³ Conforming to Pallasmaa "*We must*

¹⁶ Jorge Otero-Pailos, *Architecture's historical turn: phenomenology and the rise of the postmodern* (Minnesota: U of Minnesota Press, 2013), Google Books.

¹⁷ Klaske Maria Havik, "Writing Urban Atmospheres: Literary Methods to Investigate the Thresholds of Atmospheres." in *The Routledge Companion on Architecture Literature and the City*, ed. Jonathan Charley (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019) 270-271.

¹⁸ Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Thinking Hand: Existential and Embodied Wisdom in Architecture* (Chichester: Wiley, 2010), 72.

¹⁹ Klaske Havik, *Urban Literacy: reading and writing architecture* (Rotterdam: Nai010 Publishers, 2014), 6.

²⁰ Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Thinking Hand: Existential and Embodied Wisdom in Architecture* (Chichester: Wiley, 2010), 55.

²¹ Klaske Maria Havik, "Writing Urban Atmospheres: Literary Methods to Investigate the Thresholds of Atmospheres." in *The Routledge Companion on Architecture Literature and the City*, ed. Jonathan Charley (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019) 270

²² Ray Lucas. *Research Methods for Architecture* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2016), 7, ProQuest Ebrary.

²³ Eireen Schreurs, "What isn't there", in *OASE*, no. 101 (2018): 120-129.

not try to make materials speak our language, we must go with them to the point where others will understand their language."²⁴

Metaphorically speaking, humans also do not speak the same language, but everyone understands body language because of this, in general, a human sensorial understanding. I believe that this should be reflected in architecture; whereas it speaks to the bodily experience of an individual, understood by many. It should be logical, understandable, just like its materiality, spaces and within a larger scale understandable for its role in society. Still, even architects that seem to master this language, like Peter Zumthor and Tadao Ando, cannot reasonably explain how they created it.²⁵ They own existential knowledge to create these spaces of experiences. This approach and understanding completely plug into the chair of Urban architecture. Their approach concerns completing or re-directing an urban context by designing meaningful places and buildings. What does the existing urban fabric offer and what can you, as a designer, contribute in return?

In my opinion, praxeological and phenomenological research should be more present in (architectural) design education, since it is so valuable. Fransje Hooijmeijer also inspired me during the second lecture, where she proposed the question of how you deal with challenges when you don't know what it is? You conduct research, and instead of one solution, you will probably find yourself with more questions instead. Altering methods and perspectives, switching between scales will result in profound, thorough research but will not secure a clear solution. The other way around, if one only uses one method and ignores the rest, the outcome has a chance to be superficial. That is why I believe that architects should start with their intuition, what offers a specific place, what is remarkable and what is interesting to research. Every design asks for different research methods and should be approached anew.

I believe that every architect should approach every design anew since they are designing a new atmosphere, a new experience. Architects are the translators of the architectural sign language. Then how can a building create, promote and communicate the cultures of craft and specific networks of people, places and knowledge? The designer has to conduct research into the layers of people, places, knowledge, find the interaction and communication between them. This will result in a design for the user from an emic, phenomenological approach, with the intrinsic need of engaging in every aspect of the project.

As an architect in training, I have always been fascinated by environments, how they are constructed and how people use them. How atmospheres are created by their physical context as well as the human behaviour. How they are understood and how people dwell upon them. Architects and urban

²⁴ Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Thinking Hand : Existential and Embodied Wisdom in Architecture* (Chichester: Wiley, 2010), 55.

²⁵ Frick, Mathias, "Architect Tadao Ando – Van leegte naar oneindigheid" In *Close Up*, 2013. Accessed on 13 february 2020.

https://www.npostart.nl/close-up/19-09-2015/AT_2043488

planners design these built spaces we live in. This design education starts with set of given apparatus that follows existing design methods, which offers the fundamentals for conducting research for a specific location. The essential tools for analysis, including a list of research topics. This pre-knowledge is necessary for a designer to establish a strong design concept to complete or re-direct the given context. Along the way, one skill themselves in the taught methodologies, adding it to his or her 'pallet of methodologies'. After graduation, at the Technical University Delft, one is titled as a 'Master of Science'. According to Jorge Meija Hernandez, to become a 'Master of Science', one should be skilled in the acquisition of knowledge, in our case architectural knowledge.²⁶ This knowledge is gained through research which underlines the importance of well-conducted research. As Lucas concludes in his book, architecture is a complex, multifaced field of study, meaning no single approach can tell you everything you need to know, which means that there are numerous possibilities to gain knowledge in the field. This interpretation underlies that there is no wrong or right approach to conduct research or to embark an assignment, as long as one is open and honest about the process and framework of the research.²⁷ However, the experiential side of researching a site according to atmospheres is still underexposed, even though this tells everything about an environment and its surroundings.

²⁶ Jorge Meija Hernandez, "*Heuristics*", accessed May 9, 2020, <https://brightspace.tudelft.nl/d2l/le/content/192744/viewContent/1618566/View>.

²⁷ Ray Lucas. *Research Methods for Architecture* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2016), 21, ProQuest Ebrary.

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