Seeking Purpose – Personal Conflict

The undertaken research started out with a personal conflict consisting of doubts towards my design approach and the driving force behind my decision-making when designing. The subliminal question was: What is the greater goal behind my architectural expressions? What do I strive for when acting as an architect? Therefore, it should have been evident that the journey I took on would reveal itself as a deeply personal one. One that goes beyond the professional sphere. But it wasn't to me at least not from the very beginning, as these underlying matters were of latent nature.

Disconnectedness and Felt Alienation – Conflicts Source

The inner conflict described in the preceding paragraph manifested itself in an unease towards my own designs, but also towards the way architecture is mostly taught and practiced nowadays. I felt a perceptible disconnectedness towards our environment which then again caused an inappropriate interaction and alternation of it. I decided to search for an alternative way, that could function as liberation from the conventional established approach.

Spirituality – Hope for an Alternative

My hope was to find a different approach within the spiritual dimension. Exploring spirituality initially meant looking into established ways of belief namely religions. I especially started researching harmony sustaining eastern religions like Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, Shintoism, Taoism and Confucianism. The expectation was to find principles and concepts concerning the relationship with our environment that are imparted and fostered by these practices, to then translate them into architectural means. But the more I researched institutionalized spiritual beliefs the more I doubted their appropriateness and conformity with my personal beliefs and values. In fact, I started to question the necessity of an institutionalization of belief in the first place. Consequently, I continued investigating the reasons for the existence of religions.

Lost Dimension – Problematic Field and Questions

Before digging deeper into the details and subject of this research, it is important to state that this report represents merely an intermediate step. Spirituality is deeply personal and only difficult to grasp. Even during the first initial period my own perspective and understanding of it shifted and it continued to do so throughout the entire project. This attitude was and still is vital to encounter the subject in an appropriate manner. The research conducted within the field of spirituality made clear that although the goal is a scientific outcome, there is the chance of it getting into spheres that do not belong to the classic reductionists' way of thinking present in most sciences. Some of the themes addressed are even considered a taboo. (Goodall 2003) It touches upon a dimension that is not perceivable by science at least the way it is taught in school.

The problematic that is treated in the research concerns the alienated and disconnected way we perceive our environment and therefore also the way we encounter and interact with it. This is mainly due to the established unnatural societal systems, conventions, and the behavior that is the result of a constructed human centered realities. This touches for instance upon economic and political factors that impact the modes of living and issues of health on a personal level, but also affect the global scale e. g. climate crisis,

sixth mass extinction. Present remedial activities to ameliorate the seemingly desperate situation are insufficient. As a result, a shift in mentality and an alternative way of approaching these precarious circumstances is needed. (Braidotti 2018)

The proposal is to pursue an approach that is characterized by an idea of *harmony*. By breaking the scientific taboo and integration of spirituality into our thinking we might (re)discover a dimension that has been forgotten and neglected in most societies. Through a process of unlearning the established modes of interaction with our environment, but also other species and fellow human beings could be transformed into a more empathic encounter and communion.

The notion of the forgotten here relates to the innate human capability to communicate and understand other species, it refers to the relational aspects also referred to as *Animism*. (Taylor 2010) Some claim that every child is blessed with an innate ability to perceive this dimension. The American Buddhist-Animist and Pulitzer Prize winning author of *Turtle Island*, *Gary Snyder* calls what I'm referring to an animistic perception (Davis 1993), and states "I was born a natural animist. It wasn't a moral or intellectual thing, from early childhood, I felt the presence of other beings … I think most kids are natural animists." (Snyder 1993). His way of expressing it might not be fitting for everyone, nevertheless it shows the idea of the innate.

The neglected knowledge pertains to the indigenous or traditional knowledge of ecology. A knowledge that is dynamic and cumulative, mostly dealing with local environmental phenomena and species. This knowledge is based on a cultural transmission through generations, often through an oral and collective event of storytelling. (Berkes 2018)

The main question arising from these insights is:
How can we deal with the disconnectedness from our environment in a way that enables us to transform our alienated view of it into an understanding and empathic relation with it, so that a more harmonious togetherness can be facilitated?

But also:
Can spirituality help us to regain an interest and empathic feelings for other species and our surroundings?

Consequently:
What would an architecture that transcends the established modes of thinking, represents a newly defined set of values and its corresponding principles look like?

And:
Whom would it serve and what kind of change in approach does it require?

The goal is to create an understanding of what *harmony* is through an exploration of the *spiritual dimension*, that may never be revealed in its full extend. The subject is by nature vague. The quest is to find out what this *lost dimension* is or better what it is for me. Other descriptions for it are Hegel's *Geist*, Lao-Tzu's *Tao*, Plotinius' "One" or Spinoza's "substance". It can be described as a form of unity (Levine 1997) or as I propose to call it *harmony*. It can be found in philosophy, poetry, visual art and music or in nature. It has something to do with the sublime and beautiful. (Taylor 2010) It can be called divine or spiritual. As you can already tell by now it is something intangible and tangible at the same time. Something abstract and concrete. This is what makes it so difficult to understand and yet so fascinating.

Spiritual Ecologies – Research Field

Terminology is essential to communicate clearly, but also and specially to indicate the similarities and differences. Thus, etymology and the fact that words change in terms of meaning based on time and subjective perception or interpretation must be respected in some way. Even though I'm treating a subject and sensations that from time to time can be tough to express in words. Some argue that the way we communicate might be the reason why we got alienated from this world in the first place. When it comes to

spirituality terms like religion, theism, God, deity, divine, sacred, sublime or awe are frequently used and associated with a wide range of diverse experiences and worldviews.

Edmund Burke's view in reference to those terms can be found in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* that can be seen "as one of the earliest examples of the scholarly study of religion." (Taylor 2010) He argues that they "arise from the human experience in nature" and are "evoked by … feeling of 'Astonishment' that comes from encounters with terrifying power". (Taylor 2010) Whereas Jaques Rousseau's position differs and links the sublime to beauty in nature. Rousseau also "believed that in a true state of nature there is sublime *harmony*, equality, beauty and contentment" (Taylor 2010) to be found.

Another big aspect of spirituality is belief and the terms that relate to it e. g. monotheism, polytheism, atheism or the different niches like Heathenism, Paganism, Pantheism, Panentheism, Pansophism, Animism, Organicism. As before alluded I began this journey with researching eastern religions that are generally accepted, established, and understood as such by mainstream society. Namely Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, Shintoism, Taoism and Confucianism. The latter is only arguably a religion as it is often seen more like a philosophy. (Brown 2023)

What got me into this field in the first place was a side note in a lecture *Rosi Braidotti* gave at *The 5ᵗʰ World Humanities Forum,* where she mentions some of the religions I stated in reference to a "nature-culture continuum" and "becoming one". (Braidotti 2018) I encountered the posthumanist perspective during a critical inquiry on *Biophilic Design* that is based on a romanticized idea with humans and nature at its center neglecting the technological aspect in architecture and is therefore of esoteric, unconvincing nature as I concluded. Whilst conducting this research I also had first contact points with *dark ecology, deep ecology,* and notions of *ambience.*

Dark ecology reminds of the possibility of an existence of *ambience* without a human, therefore the opposite of anthropocentrism. (Aretoulakis 2014) The crucial point is that *dark ecology* theoretically only eliminates the human aspect of the living. Animals don't feel the urge to practice architecture, at least in the human sense of planning. Meaning in a world without human architecture the profession itself becomes pointless, and therefore theorizing about it as well. This hypothetic world would be completely harmonic and unproblematic at least from a non-human perspective. Whereas from a human perspective my goal is to achieve a *harmonious togetherness* with a human agency. Therefore, the human species as a part of the whole. To enable this possibility an understanding of the interdependence is vital. *Deep ecology* engages with this interdependency and the meaning of the parts that is gained by their position in the collective with a human. (Aretoulakis 2014)

Connected to *deep ecology* but in a more *spiritual realm* the notion of *Dark Green Religion* introduced by *Bron Taylor* comes into play. Here I see a correlation between what I was originally searching for in *Biophilic Design*, the natural aspect and the *spiritual realm* that offers another dimension. Maybe the missing part? The most interesting subsection within *Dark Green Religion* that *Taylor* divides into four main categories for me are the two he calls *Natural Animism* and *Gaian Naturalism* and represent the *Naturalistic Dark Green Religion*. *Naturalistic Dark Green Religion* is characterized by a skeptic approach and often combined with a scientific understanding. Although the differentiation between science and nonscientific is difficult when it comes to spirituality, as I explained in the introduction. The *Animism* in the *Animistic Religions* (*Spiritual Animism* and *Natural Animism*) deriving from the Latin word anima, meaning soul, life intention or consciousness is concerned with an understanding of natural forces to create mutually beneficial and respectful relations with all living beings. *Gaian Earth Religions* (*Gaina Spiritualism* and *Gaian Naturalism*) have a more holistic conception and are aiming for an explanation of ecosystems or the universe and their functions. (Taylor 2010)

What I hoped to gain by looking into these *spiritual ecologies* is an interaction with our environment and the application of architecture in a more empathic way, that is informed by *science* and *spirituality*. Ultimately the objective is the liberation from static structures such as fixed theoretical frameworks and use of references. An alternative approach requires deviation from the established procedures. Something that I still find myself struggling with. Only in rare occasions I feel like successfully escaping this mindset, most of the time whilst being in contact with nature, poetry, music or art. As *Shanti Sumartojo* stated during a lecture titled

Atmospheres, Ineffability and Powers of Attention: Attuning to Architecture it is more about "trying to be ready to perceive instead of going to search for it". (Sumartojo 2023)

Although I partially agree with her statement I cannot fully do so, as I'm convinced of a reciprocal relation between space and experience. Therefore, I want to address what is seemingly in order or throughout designed. I believe that there lays a great potential in spontaneity. But if a place is completely thought through than it is limiting as in there is specific things that are supposed to happen there or a way it is to be perceive. This regulating factor is depriving it of the ability to host possibilities. On the other hand, something that is perceived by the public as chaotic can be regarded as a *natural composition* that is defined by *harmony*. A perfectly harmonious place therefore is a place with endless possibilities characterized by the absence of expectations. To allow *natural composition* means to renounce some of the decision-making power the designers or architects possess. It means to replace some authority with a sense of collectivity. A collectivity that is made up of more than the human agency.

Personal Spirituality – Identifying Values

It slowly became clear to me that I needed to define my own values, to be able to act accordingly, represent, and promote them through my actions. The difficulties in identifying myself with institutionalized religions derives partly from a skepticism towards the belief in the supernatural. The form of spirituality that I can identify with would need to be a dynamic and elusive form of nature religion that is influenced by three different realms that cannot be seen as fully isolated but function together to result in a bricolage of spirituality. It is firstly informed by personal experience including notions of the societal impact. Here I refer to my own perception, feelings, and sensations. Furthermore, it includes interactions with other subjects that do not necessarily have to be humans. This bridges into the second sphere that consist of individual notions of the sublime that include the mere existence of me others and the environment, but also the immense complexity of the world and its beauty. The ungraspable vastness of the world and its subjects, also bears the implication of a balancing act or a sense of harmony that exists between the different parts it consists of. This is represented by constant change. The third and last realm that shapes my spirituality is a historical and scientific understanding of the world that is driven by curiosity and a sense of wonder that can be found within the unraveling of the before mentioned complexity.
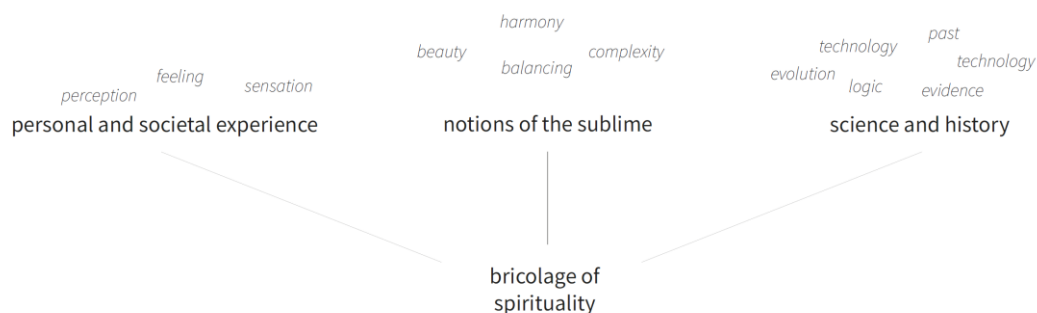

Figure 1 - Diagram Spirituality by Author

Only after a period of contemplation and surrounding myself with questions of purpose, but also simply feeling I was able to discover my understanding of spirituality. The basic values I strive to fight for are Life and Love (for Life), to cater for a continuity of what I cherish. A quote from Erich Fromm when defining Biophilia comes very close to what I could call a personal mantra.

"Biophilia is the passionate love of life and of all that is alive; it is the wish to further growth, whether in a person, a plant, an idea, or a social group" – Erich Fromm (Fromm 1973)

Fostering complexity instead of striving for simplicity, therefore becomes a requirement. This not only fortifies the beauty of the reality we live in, furthermore it facilitates the existence of life in it.

Another citation would rather describe on how I want to inform my decision making or acting in general, but also as a human in the role of an architect.

"Life itself we must accept as that which has value, and whether something else does can only be judged relatively to life, namely whether it is apt to promote life or not." – Ludwig Boltzmann (Boltzmann 1905/1974)

Paradigm Shift – Post-Anthropocene

During the establishment of civilization architecture has been primarily playing the role of fostering exclusively human lifeforms. I believe that to promote life we must most definitely welcome diversity of life. This means looking beyond the human and include the non-human. Therefore, I propose an *Ecological Architecture*. An architecture that is concerned with the relation of **all** living organisms to one another and to their physical surroundings.

Dealing with Complexity – Methodological Positioning and Approach

Facing the complexity of the subject and the tragic past and present developments that shift away from a once so prominent and extensive spiritual understanding of the world, that result in an alienated interaction and treatment of our environment, it is easy to plunge into the depths of despair. (Berkes 2018)

For that reason, I promised myself to maintain a rigorously *optimistic* stance, taking advantage of *curiosity* as a main driver of this research. The problem in such an approach is to risk falling into a naive perception, which I tried to avoid. For the most part I have been successful in keeping an optimistic stance. Although I must admit that there were two main reasons that complicated maintaining it. It was not as expected the tragic past or present developments regarding the estrangement of society from the spiritual realm. On the contrary it gave me hope to imagine a future in which we tap into the potentials of rediscovering this dimension. The difficulty for me was finding a correlation between the seemingly very abstract research I have conducted and the practical approach that an architectural project requires. Locating and determining the subject of the project were part of this challenging step. The second challenge concerned maintaining the attitude towards designing.

Curiosity certainly played a large role in the course of this project. Exploring in many diverse directions was crucial. Especially if we consider that the project exceeded the purpose of a mere academic body of work. The research reached far into my personal life and caused a significant shift in perspective. Eventually coincidence was what lead to the final decision on the subject and place of the intervention I'm proposing. Although from time to time this curiosity because not directed in a specific direction can also become distraction leading to confusion. Therefore, coordination and consultation with my tutors, fellow students, external experts, or friends were essential.

My goal was to bring different worldviews into account and by reasoning on them creating an approach that is as much as possible diversified. Afterall accepting and embracing diversity means paving the way for *harmony*. (Lomas and Xue 2022) Creating an understanding of the single parts and their interrelatedness and interdependence, unifying the strengths of science and spirituality could lead to as Jane Goodall puts it "the final stage of human evolution, *spiritual evolution*". (Goodall 2008) *Bron Taylor* in reference to *Thoreau's* moral anthropology mentions a "*moral evolution*: the necessity of human moral/spiritual/scientific growth." (Taylor 2010) By shifting away from the mainstream perception, I expected to make unexpected discoveries and to gain new insights. Clearly there is wisdom that has been forgotten, neglected, or even displaced especially in the western hemisphere but also elsewhere often through European insensitive dominant cultures. (Berkes 2018)

As already hinted, I intended to go beyond the human involving all species and as a matter of fact beyond the living including the inanimate to aim for an authentic earthly *harmony*. (Bennett 2010) Calling this *lost dimension,* I was referring to in the beginning, *harmony* is a conscious choice as it makes clear that it is dealing with the relations or a fragile balance between subjects and things rather than trying to pin it down to a term or a certain entity. It is focusing on the process more than everything else, a *pragmatic experimentation.* (Savransky 2021) Acknowledgement of the vulnerability and preciousness this *harmony* consequently asks for a *sensitive* manner, in which I planned to conduct this research.

The deeper I went into the thematic of life promoting intervention and architecture the stronger my conviction became and is becoming, as it is an ongoing process. I must admit that this determination resulted also in a shift in focus and diminished consideration of for instance economical or some individual human entities and their demands.

However, I didn't want to disregard the human dimension including politics, economy, media, philosophy, physics, biology, as a in humanmade sciences or practices. For instance, in relation to politics the problematic of the current system of national states receives critique from *Gary Snyder* that advocates for a *bioregional* reinhabitation. He suggests that through "carefully learning the local lore, plant and animals that are found in particular places. When one does this mindfully, he believes, appropriate lifeways that respect the place can be (re)discovered. By going back to the land, people can rediscover their affective connections to nature." (Snyder 1977; Taylor 2010) This *holistic* approach involves what *Felix Guattari* would call the *mental,* the *social* and *environmental ecologies* or *Rosi Braidotti's zoe/geo/techno.* It has something to do with *Bateson's* relation of *mind* and *nature,* but even more with the *pattern which connects* reminding of the processual focus.

For a complete and truly holistic method an involvement or interaction with the general public or parties involved in the repurposing of land such as the farmers would have been a requirement.

When starting the research, the sensitivity was mainly directed towards the spiritual dimension in regard to people's beliefs. Eventually no real conflict within the spiritual dimension emerged as I was not dealing with actual spiritual institutionalized entities, believes such as established religions.

The sensitivity within this project is comprised through the involvement and exploration of multitude of professional fields. I realized that interdisciplinarity is an obligation for sensitivity. It is necessary to work multidisciplinary to ensure a responsible interaction with the complexity of reality.

The approach is

Posthumanist

Posthuman as it implies a notion that shifts away from the anthropocentric Weltanschauung and facilitates a production of knowledge involving the non-human, it fights the ideology of dualism in questioning divisions like mind and body or living and inanimate. "A posthumanist methodology has to be adaptable and sensitive." Furthermore, applying such a method means consciously thinking of the multilayered effects of something. (Ferrando 2012)

Non-human

The intended goal was shifting from an anthropocentric to a non-human notion. Applying my convictions to the profession leads to multispecies design, thus including the other-than-human.

Division mind and body/ animate and inanimate

Furthermore, the posthumanist approach demands a questioning of divisions like mind and body. So far, I have only tackled this issue through some daytrips to the Veluwe, Apeldoorn, Horsterwold and Oostvaarderplassen. The latter I have experience also during a full moon night walk with a guide. Another guided visit to the Horsterwold for the rutting season of the fallow deer is planned. These visits were although just lasting a limited time each very informative and expedient for the selection of the location and subject of the project. Even more enriching were the informal and seemingly circumstantial chats and opinions on the different aspects of the project. By and large, the proposed intervention was encountered with understanding and support. It seemed to be a logical step resulting in consensus amongst the parties I approached. The opposing parties and decisions were mainly motivated by economic or political motives and were countered with criticism. To strengthen the bodily experience and decision making informed by this I wish I visited the actual site of the project more often and for a longer duration (overnight). By doing so I could have explored and fostered a deeper sense of kithship. A feeling we can only achieve through the knowing of a place. Only a symbiotically relation between kinship (that related more to a genetic or parental way of belonging) and kithship (that relates to the specificity of a place and its inhabitants) can produce a truly empathic approach. To do this in an honest manner we must consider all ways of being and especially the other-than-human ways of being. Another theme that will remain theoretically unsatisfactory touched upon is the meaning and relation of the inanimate in respect to life, as it would go beyond the scope of this master thesis. The thematic could fill easily the content of a separate thesis. Nevertheless, it is a topic that is tackled within the project through experimentation with different materials and techniques. The inanimate is also part of the geological research and the spatial experience of the subjects that the project caters for. The chosen form, structure and materiality inform the bodily experience of the alternated place and therefore create a relation between the animate and the inanimate.

Adaptability (and sensitivity)

Regarding the adaptability of the methodology, I believe I have met the requirements of a posthumanist approach as the projects factual scope was not set from the beginning the underlaying values were developed during the process and informed the decisions that were made. Shortcomings with respect to adaptability could arguably only be found within the final product of the construction by no means concerning the process. I always made sure of keeping a dynamic attitude and openness towards change to the project and research. The progression was at all times driven by the knowledge gained along the way. The structure core itself may not be adaptable, nonetheless the upper layer is left to coincidence with nature taking over the design and deciding for instance the vegetation that will grow in the varying landscape and conditions. Additionally, the secondary structure will only be of supportive character until the living entities overtake the functional aspect of its structure. Therefore, the way is paved for life to flourish and finally support other forms of its kind. Life supporting life.

Multilayered effects

Although the wolf inspired this project, the beneficiaries are a manifold of different species including the human. The project might disadvantage a limited number of individuals such as the farmers that own the land through which the newly established corridor is located. On the other hand, the quantity of advantaged subjects is vast, and the limits of these positive effects are hardly determinable. Positive effects are e. g. an increase of habitat connectivity, hence enabling natural migration for deer and access to larger genetic pools in the populations throughout the whole range of the projects extend. Another benefit would be the opening of enclosed natural areas such as the Oostvaarderplassen to natural predators to reduce population of large grazers in a natural way. This leads to a reduction or cessation of annual culling. Furthermore, the animals that the wolf will be feeding on, will be the weakest and this will benefit the overall health of the whole herd. The cession and transformation of more territory into natural areas will be beneficial to the nitrogen

pollution of the land and by giving wild animals more place to retreat to, we keep them away from towns and cities. The ecoduct also reduces possibility of roadkill and wildlife-vehicle collisions to a minimum.

Furthermore, an ethical responsibility of enabling true wilderness within the Netherlands is met or at least a positive development in that regard. Actually, to meet this demand in its entirety an even bigger continental or even global scale would be necessary. Shifting away from an artificial, human-made notion of nature often named in an insincere manner "new nature", will bring us closer to a world of self-sustained nature.

Genealogical

Genealogical as firstly it represents a different form of analysis. Secondly it constitutes a more powerful mode of critique. Thirdly it allows a way to confront different bodies of knowledge in a suspicious manner (Hook and Bowman 2007) in my case that would be the bodies of science and *spirituality* which promote seemingly different worldviews and ways of perceiving. By making use of ***analogical reasoning***, meaning that I will try to see communalities between two different systems (Bartha 2022), I'm expecting a multitude of diverse outcomes.

Different form of analysis

The research I conducted was regarding an unconventional correlation of the built environment and spirituality. Including the spiritual into our thinking and subsequently also in our approach towards the interaction and alternation of our environment is certainly no mainstream idea. Therefore, it is a different form of analysis and fits the first requirement for a genealogical approach.

More powerful mode of critique

The research was motivated by a felt alienation towards the environment of not only designers such as architects but society in general. A gadget like addition of natural elements is often used to create a sensation of naturality. This leads to an insincere relation to our environment and detachment from it. Trying to tackle the issue purely driven by the desire to promote life through a change of perspectives is what I'm striving for. Designing from this perspective for life the human action becomes secondary. The architecture proposed in this project serves mainly the other-than-human and shifts away from a service provided merely for human users. The existence and effort put into such a structure represents a devotion to a worldview that celebrates the kinship amongst all forms of life.

Confronting different bodies of knowledge (spirituality and science) in a suspicious manner

The intention of the research is to confront two different bodies of knowledge, namely spirituality and science. Whereby spirituality was the outset of the research. Although spirituality is rarely seen as a body of knowledge, at least in the academic milieu. Spirituality becoming a catalyst for action and decision making infused with defined core values such as life and love for life.

Analogical reasoning

My intent was to seek communalities between the two different systems by conducting a scientific investigation. In the first phase of the research, it became clear that it was going to be inevitable a deeply personal issue more than everything else. This leads me to the particularity of this research; it is difficult to

define where the scientific part ends and where the spiritual section begins or the other way around. It is fragmented just as my own spiritualty. The most relevant common feature of the two themes might be that they both shape me and thereby my subjectivity.

Nevertheless, I want to try to identify the realms within certain elements of the project. The theory research I put into exploring existing spiritualities can be seen as a scientific approach. The same applies to the research in more abstract forms of nature spirituality and historical inquiry of our relationship with the environment. What I would identify as the spiritual part of it is the contemplation and reflection of the gained knowledge. The spiritual response was not always immediate, other times it was. What makes it spiritual for me was the depth of the thoughts that truly changed my view on our environment and helped me define my own values. They were evoking feelings, feelings that defined the purpose of this project, changed my attitude as an aspiring architect or even in life in general. At times it was very clear, but then again it wasn't. I guess that is what makes spirituality what it is, it cannot be completely explained, but it is evokes powerful emotions that motivate our actions.

In respect to the intervention the scientific approach is reflected in the research that was conducted in the fields of biology, geology, and architectural references. The basis for a desire to intervene in the manner I'm proposing is guided by a strong conviction that developed during the process of the theoretical research the understanding of my own spirituality.

Ethico-aesthetic

Ethico-aesthetic as an alternative view to the neo-liberal ideology opening up to new modes and potentialities of thinking and living. This refers to a processual and event-centered reconstruction of the human subject. (Dahlberg 2016; Hynes 2013) Seeing the human as equal part of the environment and speculate with the consequences of this scenario, resulting in limitation and vulnerability. I want to remind of the *genealogical approach* and that in speculations many of the methodological injunctions of *genealogy* can be exemplified. (Hook and Bowman 2007) By building for other species than the human I'm pursuing an alternative approach that opposes to a neo-liberal ideology. Putting life in the center of attention of design opens up new potentialities of thinking and living. Acting for other-than-human agents is beneficial also for the human agency and facilitates the possibility to dissolve boundaries between them.

Eclectic

Eclectic as it is a personal, complex subject concerning matters of belief and modalities of perception often dealt with through powerful institutions and actors, but also concerning non-quantifiable spheres like those of emotion. Through selecting within a diverse range of practices and ideologies an appropriate system and understanding is ensured. (Mcclellan 2003) The challenge lays in navigating through this sheer quantity of possibilities.

The eclectic character of this research is implicit due to its complexity and extent. The before mentioned duality of spirituality and science comprises many different spheres of life, the two cannot be untangled as life nourishes them both. I'm not the first one to muse about it. Nevertheless, this research and the project go beyond eclecticism as they contain and are shaped by my personal perception, belief, and emotions. Furthermore, the particular place and time I chose to undergo this journey induce a certain uniqueness due to the particularity of the given circumstances.
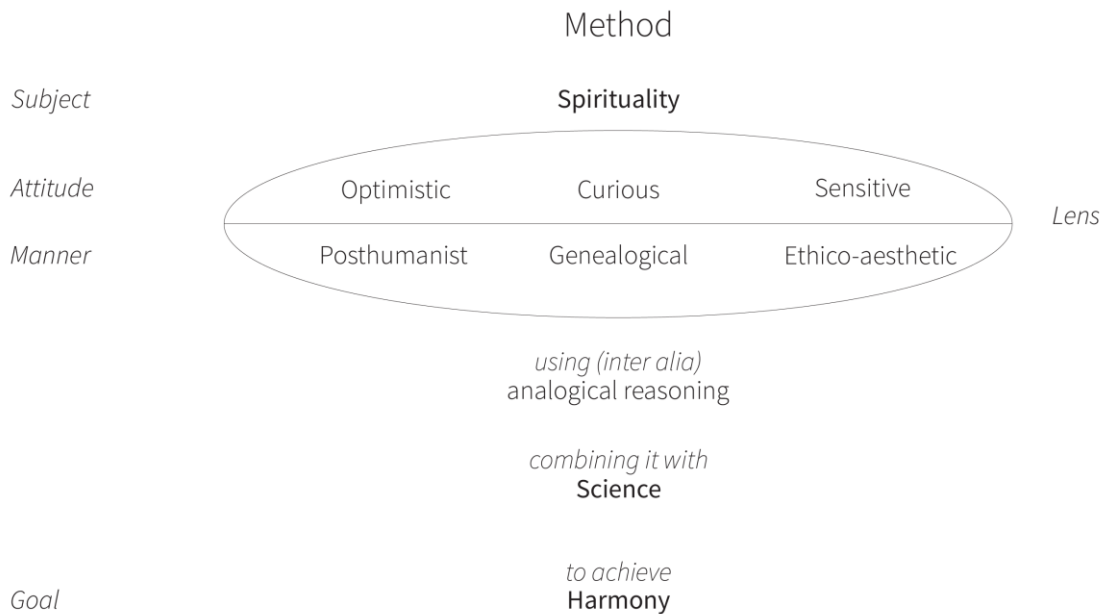
Method

Subject — **Spirituality**

Attitude — Optimistic   Curious   Sensitive

Lens

Manner — Posthumanist   Genealogical   Ethico-aesthetic

using (inter alia)
analogical reasoning

combining it with
Science

to achieve
Goal — **Harmony**

Figure 2 - Diagram Methodology by Author

The Fields Response – A Story of Birds and Bees

The architectural field has not been ignoring the necessity of inclusion of other lifeforms, however in my opinion it is lacking an unmitigated approach in that regard. So called multi-species design is becoming more and more a topic that is being addressed by a range of practitioners. The examples though mainly only deal with coexistence of humans and species that are somewhat accepted within human vicinity. This may be because of the difficulty of dealing with the potentially uncomfortable or dangerous species.

Including the Lethal – Architecture for Wolves

Due to recent events and appearing discourses within society my attention was drawn to one specific animal: the wolf. There are three reasons for including especially this species. Firstly, there is a strong emotional, mythological, and historical notion that is attached to the wolf. This means that there is high potential to reach people with and intervention concerning this species. The wolf as the once most widespread predator was eradicated from most of the European continent. Secondly, the wolf is one of only a few predators on this continent that can be lethal to human beings. Therefore, designing for this threatening species is a great challenge. A challenge that I'm not completely succeeding to take on within this project. At least not in the manner I initially wanted to. The initial idea was to design for coexistence with lethal predators within the urban environment. But after being confronted with the reality of it I realized, that facilitating this coexistence within predominantly human spaces such as a city poses an extremely difficult set of problems. Some of these intricate issues I decided to avoid, as they would exceed the scope of a master thesis. Certainly, this doesn't mean that I'm not interested in addressing this troublesome situation in its full extend, it only means not yet.

Ecoduct – Design Idea

By choosing a site where the human typically only does one thing namely travel, I can set the focus on fostering animal needs and in this case, it is animal mobility. I intend to mainly design for animals, but not exclusively. Ironically the streets, a mean to improve mobility, form a boundary for other forms of life. By trying to cross these barriers they risk their lives and the lives of the human travelers. My project tries to connect different habitats to amplify them and connect them. By doing so the innate desire and for most species necessity to migrate can be exerted. A connection between the Veluwe, where the wolf is currently present, over the Horsterwold up to the Ostvaarderplassen will also cause a more natural balance in species population and serve biodiversity. Not only the wolf but diversity of life will be enhanced by this intervention. The annual culling of large grazers can be reduced if not put to an end. A prime example for the success of a reintroduction of a lethal predator is the Yellowstone National Park's Wolf Reintroduction in 1995. This measure resulted ultimately in an substantial improvement of biodiversity in the area. Imagining a world where the already projected Ostvaarderwold is realized and expanding it will ideally lead to a healthier, resilient, and more natural wildlife within the Netherlands. This does not only indirectly benefit the human, but also in a direct manner.

The travelling human becomes a witness of architectures agency serving non-human needs. For a moment animal mobility becomes the main actor and therefore center of attention in a place that was claimed for exclusively human activity. A place (serving only-human mobility) of danger and potential death for all species is transformed into a place and symbol for concession that connects worlds. The project reveals that coexistence can be solved in a way of overlapping worlds for different species without necessarily sharing one place designing a distance or a path of less resistance for individuals can have positive effects for all the participating parties, especially but not exclusively when dealing with large carnivores.

The intervention is inspired and strengthened by a theory that is based in conservation biology called *rewilding*. The theory first introduced by Michael Soulé and Reed Noss deals with biodiversity. It defines three main concerns that facilitate a resilient and self-sustaining ecology. The elements are cores, corridors, and carnivores. The cores in my case are represented by Oostvaardersplassen, Horsterwold and Veluwe. The corridors are the realization of Oostvaarderswold and the new connection I propose between Horsterwold and Veluwe with the main focus on the ecoduct bridging the A28 highway. The carnivore factor will be met through the now facilitated access for wolves to a larger area.

Interdisciplinarity – Need for Collaboration

Within this project I have reached out to a multiplicity of actors and professionals. I believe we as architects should build upon the expertise of other specialists to keep us grounded and not fall into the trap of naivety. Another reason is purely the lack of knowledge that the standard education and practice have due to a humancentric focus. In other words, architects are mostly exclusively concerned about human needs and perceptions. I have conducted research in the fields of biology, ecology, philosophy, design, and engineering.

Future Prospects – Required Audacity

Scientists that are involved in the very intricate realities and confronted with a multitude of stakeholders, may often be frustrated with this constant and seemingly desperate fight. Nevertheless, I think it is essential to not fall into despair. I truly believe that we as architects coming from a creative sector can and must allow ourselves to think out of the box and try to come up with alternative solutions. Attempting to imagine a future of coexistence with other species, may it be a plant an animal or any other form of life. We must make bold proposes until they no longer are perceived as unachievable or insane. Until the time comes where the allegedly mad solutions become a new standard. We'll have to deviate from what is the norm to initiate change.

Metaphor – Method

Metaphors can help to transform an elusive concern into something more graspable, without becoming to concrete. The layer of interpretation leaves room for creativity. A translation of our imagination and understanding of those metaphors can become a basis for creation, an architectural act. Inspirations for this process can be found in the making of art or composition of music. Traces of this artistic aspect are also found in architecture and must gain more attention.

The final result of this project can be seen as a metaphor. A human-made structure to facilitate animal movement. An inanimate object facilitating life on it and across it. A living bridge that promotes life.

Linking worlds advocates for a different worldview.

A worldview that…

demands a shift in perspectives
lifts the value of life above all
is inclusive rather than exclusive
fosters a feeling of kinship amongst all species
welcomes diversity
cares for the ones that are in need of help
advocates for compromises
facilitates coexistence

(Jacobs and Narváez 2022)

The project in its materialization represents just a fraction of what it means to me. Through the wholeheartedness I approached it I have found a direction for my professional career as much as for my life. The result might not be quantifiable in the sense of usual measures that we are being taught. More importantly it has become the spark for a passion. A passion that informs "a creative life beyond the overt cultural narratives and expectations of society … in solidarity with all humans, all beings, and in reciprocity with …earth." (Haupt 2021)

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