

## **B-Nieuws**

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### **"It did not make me a better architect"**

Considering the studies at the Architecture Department of the Technical University in Delft as an education for a profession, being an architect, seems to be not done. We are supposed to educate them as scientists. The quality of the education is measured as the quality of the research, preferably resulting in a number of interesting publications. It seems that the education as a professional architect is considered as almost an undesirable side effect.

About ten years ago, besides working as an architect, I also was teaching at the Faculty of Architecture. It was then that plans for a PhD started to develop. However, what kept me from starting a PhD research was, what I perceived as the gap between theoretical research and the professional architectural practice. They seemed to be two entirely separate worlds. This was more or less confirmed when one day I had a conversation with an architect who had recently finished a PhD on the works and thoughts of a well known foreign architect. His research was a very readable study that generated substantial new insights. However, he commented his research with the remark: "I did not make me a better architect".

His remark has been formative for my views on research. I began to realize that for me an architectural research should help to improve my skills as an architect. And maybe others, by reading my research, could also be better architects.

At the end of the academic year I resigned from the faculty and started to work full time at an architectural office. I also started a PhD research in which I was going to reflect critically on the design process I used in my own architectural assignments. The resulting new insights were immediately applied in the following design assignments. So there was indeed a link between theoretical research and the professional practice.

It is not for me to judge whether I have become a better architect because of my research, but I do know that I design in a very different way. And according to the regular visits to the online version of my thesis and the reactions I get, others do also benefit from my research. Because of my experiences as a researcher, for me science is no longer "knowing in order to know", but "knowing in order to apply it to something"

Such an idea could also be guiding for scientific research in architecture. Maybe our research activities should focus on the reflection on our own design activities. Not only to make us a better designer, but also to share our knowledge and insights with others, so they can also be better in their profession.

Let us not be ashamed that we educate people for a fantastic profession. But we should educate our students to have the knowledge and skills to critically reflect on their own designs and to publish their reflections. If we look at it this way, educating our student for an architectural profession and teaching them scientific abilities are not contrary to each other.