

Practice based PhDs at the AD faculty

“AD should integrate practice based research as part of its research activity and develop adequate shared frames and routines in line with international standards” (translated from the faculty’s Strategy document: p.10)

Part I: Overall frames

The faculty aims to develop a field of research grounded on the knowledge base that is particular for our research and education, hereunder our master programs in architecture, planning and design. As part of this goal, more PhD candidates should work with questions relevant for practice within our fields and thus make use of the competences, methods of inquiry and vocabulary that are specific for architecture, design, planning and art.

Practice based research is a growing field and debated in most architecture, design and art schools in Europe as well as globally, and the faculty wants to take part in international debates around this. It aims with this to contribute to building a stronger research culture among staff appointed on basis of architectural, planning, design or artistic practice and to pursue research that is perceived as relevant for practice within our fields outside academia.

What is a Practice based PhD?

Practice based research is understood as research in which the practice of architecture, planning, design or art itself is an essential component of the research process and/or the research results (Borgdorff, 2011). This is in line with what Frayling (1993) called “research ‘through’ design” as opposed to research ‘for’ or ‘into’ design and also referred to when Till (2007) writes about how to make architecture speak through research: “Research ‘through’ uses architectural design and production as a part of the research methodology itself” (ibid: 3).

The research can be based on previous or ongoing creative practices or/and research where practice in architecture, planning, design or arts are used as forms of inquiry during the investigation itself.

Practice based PhDs attain to the same overall criteria for ‘doctorateness’ as other PhDs: significance, originality and contribution to knowledge. Even if the methodology and outcomes of the research may differ from more traditional PhDs, they are regarded as a version of scientific PhDs. This implies that the research should relate to, make use of or critically reflect upon established epistemological and scientific approaches and methods along with the more practical elements.

Practice based PhDs should follow NTNU’s PhD regulations for scientific degrees. They should thus be distinguished from PhDs in artistic research, where the artwork is the main doctoral result. In a practice based PhD it is the combination of practical and theoretical elements that counts. This implies that the result of the research must consist of both written and practical/creative components. The balance between the two types of components should be open for discussion in each project.

PhD thesis format

The newly revised PhD regulations for scientific degrees at NTNU (§11.1) opens up for a combination of a textual component in combination with a (permanently documented) product or production:

“Den vitenskapelige avhandlingen kan også bestå av en skriftlig komponent i kombinasjon med et varig dokumentert produkt eller en produksjon. I slike tilfeller skal arbeidene til sammen tilfredsstille kravene til et selvstendig forskningsarbeid for graden ph.d. i henhold til internasjonale standarder innen fagområdet. Fakultetet kan sette ytterligere krav til produktandelen når det gjelder omfang eller innhold.»¹

This «product or production» can be a building, and object, a project or plan, a service, a work of art or other kinds of creative work. The «product or production» is in itself not regarded as research as such. In order to qualify as research, and not merely as practice, the PhDs must fulfil general requirements of “doctorateness”: Contextualization, critical reflection, theoretical framework, transparency and communicability is necessary. It is therefore required that the thesis contains a written part.

The thesis could be either a monography or a compilation of a body of work. In the last case, the contextualization, theoretical framework, reflection and summary of the new knowledge developed, will be in most cases presented in the “kappa” (*comprehensive summary*). The practical/creative work can be documented in models, drawings, video, photos, diagrams or digital media. Such material must be in a retrievable form. PhD candidates who submit a dissertation that includes a body of creative work may choose to arrange a presentation of this work, e.g. through an exhibition, allowing the assessment committee to view it prior to the defense.

Learning outcomes

In order to develop a more specific framework for practice based PhDs we have identified the following learning outcomes (based on existing learning outcomes for PhD in Architecture – will be translated to English):

Knowledge

The candidate:

- is in the forefront with in depth knowledge within the field of research
- masters theories and methods that are relevant for the field of research and have general knowledge of theory of science and research methodologies
- is well acquainted with central questions within the research field and has the ability to situate them in a relevant context

Skills

The candidate:

- can contribute with the development of new knowledge, new theories, methods and interpretations within relevant topics
- has the ability to formulate adequate questions, plan and carry out practice based research and development work on a high international level
- can handle complex questions within architecture, planning, design and/or art and challenge knowledge and practice in the field
- has the ability to develop a practice that is singular and of high quality, precisely because of this, generates new knowledge, although it might not be reproducible in standardised academic frameworks

¹ This is from NTNU’s draft for revised PhD regulations. It will be replaced by the English translation of this section when the final version of the regulation is approved.

- has the confidence to experiment with new and original methodologies
- has the ability to identify and understand quality through self-critical reflection

General competence

The candidate:

- has the ability to identify new, relevant ethical issues and perform research with a professional integrity
- can communicate research and development work through recognized national and international publication channels (included exhibitions if relevant)
- is an active participant in national and international debates within the field
- can use his or her research competence actively in professional development work and / or innovation
- has the ability to carry out complex, interdisciplinary projects
- has experience and confidence to critically analyse and develop new roles of architecture, planning, design and/or art in response to complex societal challenges

Recruitment of candidates

The candidates should be recruited primarily on basis of practice-based skills, from master education and/or from professional practice after completed master degree. The master degree must be within architecture, planning, design or art. In addition to this, the candidates should be able to demonstrate ability and understanding of research and writing skills.

New candidates should be appointed on basis of the recommendation of an expert assessment committee in which minimum 50 % of the members are practitioners with competence for an associate professorship, minimum one member have experience from supervising practice based ph.ds and members from minimum two schools/universities.

In order to strengthen the competence of future PhD applicants, the faculty should consider offering courses at Master level in research approaches / research philosophy that may prepare students for research, academic as well as practice-based and artistic.

Research topics

The topics of practice based PhDs should reflect fields identified as highly relevant for practice within architecture, planning, design and art. It is up to each department to specify topics in announcements of new positions.

Part II: Conditions

Supervising competence and capacity

The main supervisor should have experiences from supervising PhD-candidates to successful completion. One of the supervisors should be active within practice based or artistic research.

Supervisor training

The faculty must provide resources for enhancement of supervisors' competence within the field. This includes e.g. being able to take part in national and international PhD conferences and networks, as well as supervisor seminars for the newly established PhD in Artistic research (currently PKU). It should also be considered to organize supervisor training at our faculty (or potentially together with AHO and/or other Norwegian/Nordic schools).

Academic training

All candidates working on a practice-based PhD at AD should take the mandatory course AAR8320: *Introduction to research methods and theories of science for PhD Candidates* (7.5 credits). The course will be developed further as a common course for all PhD candidates in Architecture and Design, and should include a component on theories and methodology relevant for practice-based research. The course AAR 8350: *Theory of Knowledge and the Architects Work* is also very relevant for these candidates.

In addition, all candidates should take one course more specifically on practice based research methodology (minimum 5 credits). This can be done at NTNU or at another university, but a long-term goal should be that the faculty itself could offer this course.

NTNU offers currently (or are planning to offer) several courses that are relevant for candidates working with practice based approaches. Among these are the following:

- *Doing research with the arts as post-qualitative methodological practice* (5 credits), ILU/SU
- ESTET8863: *Arts Based Research Methodology. Practice-Led Research: Discipline Research and Ways of Human Knowledge* (5 credits), IKM/HF
- KULT8851: *Vitenskapsteori*, ITK / HF.
- KULT8860 - *Tale, tekst og tolkning. Forskerkurs i kvalitativ metode*, ITK / HF
- Dokumentasjon som refleksjon (5 credits) IKM/HF? (new course, Artistic research)
- Kunst og teknologi (5 credits) KiT/AD (new course, Artistic research)
- HFEL8000 - *Communicating Science in Journals and to the General Public* (3 credits)

To secure a close follow-up of new candidates within practice-based research, half-yearly seminars (perhaps together with PhDs in artistic research and/or with AHO?) for all candidates and supervisors should be organised. External discussants should be invited to take part. Of six such seminars, two should be with international participants.

Workplace environment

A specific studio space should be allocated to the candidates working with practice-based research. It would be beneficial to co-locate this with PhD candidates within the program of Artistic research.

Economy

There will be extra costs related to opening up for practice based PhDs at the faculty. Some of these are related to aspects mentioned above: Enhancement of supervisor competence and working space.

PhD candidates would also need a larger working budget than (most) ordinary PhD candidates, firstly in order to carry out their practice based activities during the research itself, and secondly for a final exhibition of their work. They should present a budget for these activities as part of their project description.

References

- Borgdorff, Henk (2011): "The Production of Knowledge in Artistic Research" in Biggs, M. and Karlsson, H. (eds): *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*. Oxon / New York: Routledge. Chapter 3, p.44-63
- Frayling, Christopher (2003): "Research in Art and Design" in *Royal College of Art Research Papers*, 1993/4, vol 1 no1, p 1-5

Till, Jeremy (2007): "Architectural Research: Three Myths and One Model", available at <http://www.jeremytill.net/> (accessed 2018-11-11)