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More Than a Quarter of a Century

The Doctoral Programme at Oslo School of Architecture and Design: notes on the development of education since 1981

Abstract

This paper is intended to present how the Doctoral Programme at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design (AHO, also referred to as the school later in this paper) has developed since 1981. The paper focuses on the organised research education which has been offered at the school since 1992. Although the school has been the main engine of these doctoral studies, (mainly because it has had the right to confer the doctoral degrees), it has cooperated with other kindred institutions in a mutual learning process. The paper examines in turn the eight volumes of the Research Magazine, which discusses the development of the Doctoral Programme at the school. The paper concludes with a brief evaluation regarding the doctoral programme at the AHO. In the postscript closing the paper, some contributors who have made this development possible are mentioned.

Keywords: doctoral studies, making disciplines, ADA- fields

Introduction

This paper presents the development of the doctoral programme at the AHO since 1981, the year the institution was given the right to confer a doctoral degree. The paper focuses on the organised research education which is offered by the Doctoral Programme, formally established in 1992. This education has been provided to candidates from several Art, Design & Architecture fields (ADA)¹, primarily in architecture. The paper will touch upon the following: the history, nature and purpose of the PhD, the experiences of those teaching the doctoral programme and the possibilities of reform in the light of external and internal influences. Although the school has been the main engine of these doctoral studies, (mainly because it has had the right to confer the doctoral degrees,) it has cooperated with other kindred institutions in a mutual learning process. The relations between the AHO and those institutions will also be outlined.

The structure of the paper is based on the eight volumes of the *Research Magazine*, presenting the development of the Doctoral Programme at the school through historical facts and activities. Thus the paper does not propose a well-composed "story", but rather provides contexts from the individual volumes, each representing a milestone in the development of the doctoral studies over time. The contents of each single volume of the *Research Magazine* are shown in italics in order to make the distinction between them and the main text. The objective of this "wandering among these milestones" is to give a background to the "results" of the development of the doctoral studies programme at the AHO.

The present-day Oslo School of Architecture and Design was established in 1945 as an "emergency support" for the students whose studies were curtailed by the war. In 1969, the institution was awarded the status of School of Architecture with an external governing board appointed by the Ministry of Education. In 1983 it was elevated to the status of an autonomous university college with an internal Executive Board. In 1996, the School merged with the Institute of Industrial Design, previously affiliated with the State School of Arts and Crafts.

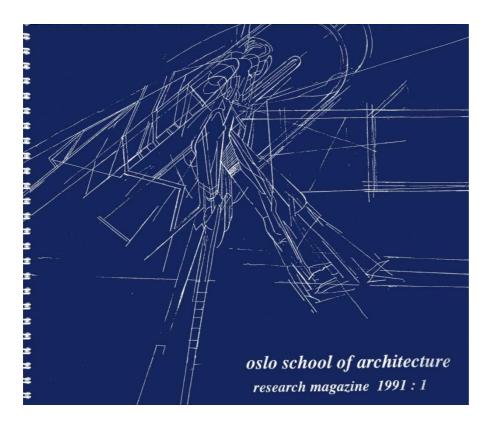
The School has traditionally emphasized the value of practice as the main source of professional and pedagogical competence. However, the status of an academic institution demanded that the School establish its own doctoral programme along the lines of similar

academic institutions. Research at the School, with few exceptions, was a relatively new phenomenon at the beginning of the 1990s. At an institution without a strong research tradition, it was a challenge to initiate organised research education. In June 1990, the Board appointed Dr. Halina Dunin-Woyseth, one of the teachers at the School, to lead the process of launching the institution's own doctoral programme.

The AHOs own journal, *Research Magazine*, has accompanied the development of the Doctoral Programme since 1990. It has documented the debate on architectural and design research in its own Scandinavian and international context, and it has discussed the principles of the content and structure of the doctoral curriculum (Johansson,2005:93-6). The journal's aforementioned eight volumes shed light on the twenty-seven years of development, as outlined below.

Doctoral Education through the 'Eyes' of the Research Magazine

The first volume of the Research Magazine (1991) summarised the preparation process for the start of the Doctoral Programme for architectural researchers. It reported extensively on a series of seminars called Research Forum, which were held at the School in the academic year 1990/1991. The objective was to stimulate a debate on architectural research, reflective practice and on new, innovative architectural works. The Forum also addressed the relationships between these issues in order to develop a relevant academic discourse. The staff presented and discussed their own work as a base for mapping the internal scholarly competencies, as well as their intentions regarding future expansions. The long-term objective of the Forum was to motivate staff to join the doctoral studies in order to increase the School's internal capacity for doctoral supervision.



In the years 1991 – 1992 an intensive debate, both inside and outside the school, took place in order to define a doctoral curriculum for the class of PhD students who began their studies in autumn 1992. At the national level, this debate included the two Norwegian schools of architecture, the AHO and the Faculty of Architecture at the Norwegian Technical University in Trondheim. At the same time, a more general debate was started among the Nordic schools of architecture, sponsored by the Nordic Academy of Advanced Studies / Nordisk Forskerakademi. This process of preparation was concluded by a research colloquium hosted by the school in 1992. The event, sponsored by the British Council, was attended by the AHO staff and by a group of British scholars from the University of Liverpool and the Oxford-based schools of architecture and planning (Dunin-Woyseth,1996:66).

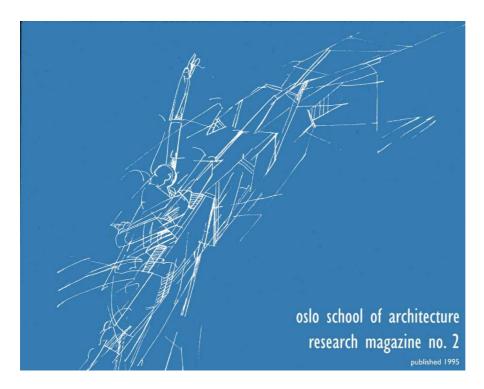
The AHO was given the right to confer a doctoral degree as early as in June 1981, but doctoral studies were essentially non-existent until 1992. The AHO's newly established Doctoral Programme was based on the national Doctoral Code, which built on four main principles: i) setting three years as the standard limit for full-time doctoral studies (six years for part-time study); ii) obligatory, organised research training; iii) supervision for each candidate by at least one appointed supervisor; and iv) admission to the doctoral programme formalized by a written agreement (A Description of Doctoral Degrees in Norway, 1994:4,5).

While the debates in the milieu of architecture led to several major ideas with regard to the prospective doctoral curriculum, the final concept for this curriculum was also influenced by discussions in the Norwegian university community in the beginning of the 1990s. In UK, attempts were also made to formulate strategies and guidelines for research education. The Norwegian conclusions appeared similar to those the British reached on the subject. They specified the research skills common to various disciplines and the basic principles of research design. The following objectives for the development of structure and syllabus for a research education were discussed: i) providing a structured transition from lower to higher grades of research work; ii) broadening students' understanding of their own discipline; and iii) developing a common disciplinary identity (Becher et al 1994:52,53). These approaches provided the basis for the school's first Study Plan (1992) for the prospective doctoral programme.

The first two objectives for research education have been achieved through various components of the curriculum. The third goal, that of developing a common disciplinary identity, has, however, been the most serious challenge to the teaching staff of the doctoral programme.

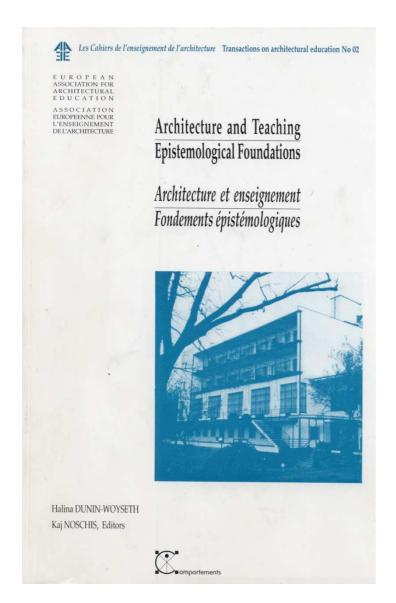
The second volume of the Research Magazine appeared in 1995. It described and discussed the first curriculum used throughout three semesters in 1992-1993 based on architecture, concentrating on the theory of architecture. Volume Two consisted of three parts, each representing a specific part of the curriculum. It discussed the introductory course to the theory of science and the humanities, the Nordic Symposium on architectural theory, and the three courses on specific subjects of common theoretical interest to the first class of the AHO's doctoral students.

From today's perspective, 15 years since the beginning of the organised doctoral education at the School, it has become clear that the curriculum expressed the intention of the research community at the School to legitimise the profession's theory as the main source of its intellectual identity. This is common to other academic disciplines, where theory constitutes the core of the doctoral curricula.



The role of architectural theory in relation to architectural scholarship has been examined during the theory courses for subsequent classes of PhD students. The issue of disciplinary identity for design professionals has been widely discussed in the European context (Doctorates in Design and Architecture, 1996). The AHO took the initiative to organise a similar debate on the matter with international participation, which resulted in the symposium "Architecture and Teaching: Epistemological Foundations" held in Ascona, Switzerland in 1997. The invited contributors represented a small group of prominent international scholars. The proceedings from the symposium, itself a co-operation among the three parties involved, have been recorded as a joint publication of the European Association of Architectural Education (EAAE) Workshop Proceedings (Vol.2), the Architecture & Behaviour series – 1998, and the AHO's Research Magazine (Vol. 3).

The third volume of the Research Magazine was published in 1998. The contributions submitted to this publication represent a strong degree of unanimity about a key issue: a knowledge base, understood as the intellectual identity of a field in the design professions, varies from that of the academic disciplines. While the latter relies heavily on theory which guides the production of new knowledge through qualified research, the role of theory in design professions is different, both with regard to its professional and research practice.



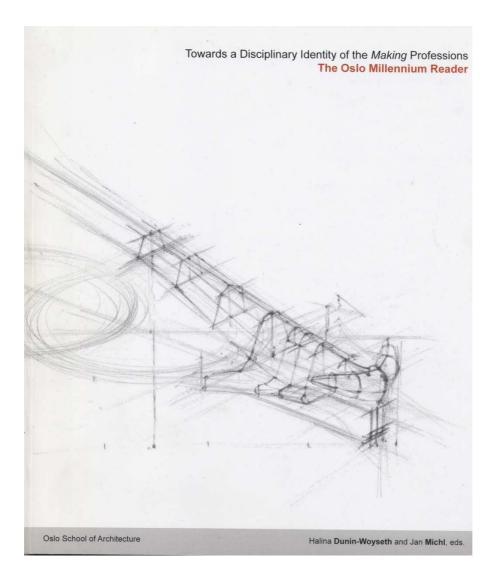
The Programme was primarily targeted towards architects, but professionals from other ADA fields, such as landscape architecture, object design, visual arts, and design education -- the "making" professions² -- were admitted for the first time in 1995. Since then, the Doctoral Programme has played an active role as a hub within the national research education system called Norway Network (Norgesnettet). Its profile has been strongly formed by the recruited candidates being mainly from the "making" professions, and affected further by research subjects being most often derived from the PhD students' own practice-related experience.

The doctoral students recruited from the art and design education fields had a different academic background than those coming from the design professions. All of them had earned a Masters of Arts and Design degree (they had what was then in Norwegian called "Hovedfag i forming"). The programmes leading to this degree were established at the two institutions of higher education, Oslo University College and Telemark University College as early as 1976 (Nielsen,2008:130). These programmes built on a three-year Bachelor degree of professional studies which prepared students for teaching arts and design at all levels, (at primary and secondary school as well as at junior colleges). The Masters degree programmes have, from their inception, been based on a specific concept of interplay between the three fields: arts /design, pedagogy and various theoretical frameworks (Fure, 2007:20-27). The output of the Master s programme has been theses where authors attempted to integrate each of these three constitutive components into a coherent and innovative whole (Melbye,2003). Thus, the

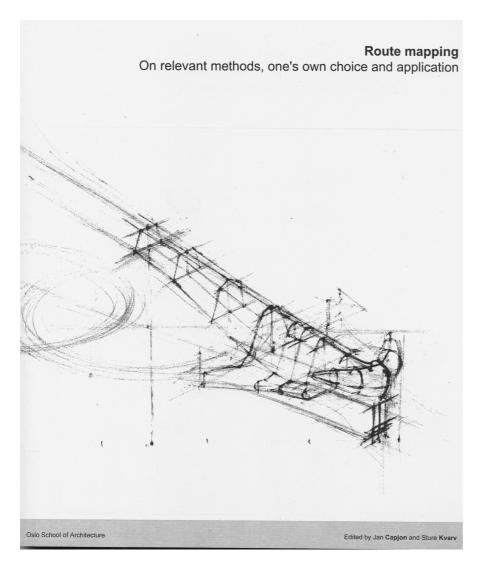
"recruits" from the arts and design education fields were those who were best prepared for doctoral studies compared to other PhD students with art and design professional backgrounds; the latter were usually not specifically trained in academic work, nor did they have experience in it.

With the admission of various design professionals, including those from arts and design education fields, a broader dialogue has been initiated. Various profession-related discourses, or even a lack thereof, have confronted one other, and a need has arisen for a common arena for scholarly discussion. This need corresponded with one of the three general objectives for research education, namely the development of a common disciplinary identity. Thus the concept of the "making disciplines" has emerged and gradually consolidated as one of the epistemological premises for the design research education. The concept of the "making disciplines" evolved from the need to establish a common intellectual platform for the doctoral students from various ADA fields, the "making" professions. It also developed from the need to "legitimise" the doctoral level in these professions within the system of the research education in traditional academic fields.

The fourth volume of the Research Magazine (2001) made an attempt to discuss the principles for establishing the "making disciplines". It also formulated reflections concerning what they represent, in what direction they could go and what criteria should determine their academic standards. It appeared under the title "Towards a Disciplinary Identity of the Making Professions" (and was a result of the Nordic Millennium Research Education Programme 1999 – 2001). It argued that the knowledge base of the design professions relies strongly on mutually-related knowledge components: history, theory and criticism. It also maintained that the academic standards can only be established over time, through research practice and continuous scholarly criticism. Upon reflection, it would perhaps have been more accurate to refer to "a quality supportive framework for the making discourses" rather than using the term "making disciplines". Their emerging theoretical basis does not offer, and may never be able to offer, a well-defined methodology, which would be inherent in the case of an established academic discipline.



The fifth volume of the Research Magazine (2002) was markedly different from the previous editions. It is a product of a group assignment for the PhD students studying at the Oslo School of Architecture. The title of the project was "Route Mapping: On Relevant Methods, One's Own Choice and Application", and its objective was to strengthen the PhD students' awareness of the criteria of clarifying and presenting one's "route mapping" in the doctoral project. Furthermore, this volume put emphasis on a more conscious process of establishing scholarly standards in the "making" professions. The importance of excellent, scholarly handicraft in this field has been internationally debated since the end of the 1990s (Frayling et al 1998; Buchanan et al., 1999; Durling and Friedman, 2000).



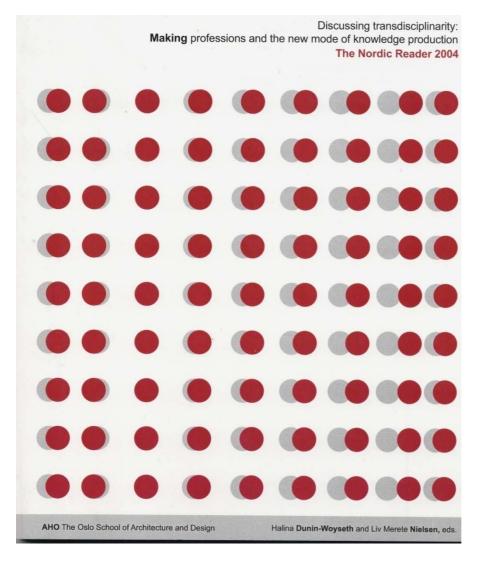
As previously mentioned, since 1992 a network of several schools of architecture and design in the Nordic countries has held the professionalisation of research education as its aim. Between 1999 and 2001, the co-operation resulted in a series of research courses called the "Millennium Programme" in which more than 50 Nordic PhD students participated. At the conclusion of the courses, the network's teachers agreed that the current status of the research education offered adequate training opportunities for the growing Nordic community of architectural and design researchers. However, this seemed to apply mainly to traditional disciplinary and interdisciplinary, academically initiated research. The network teachers decided that the next phase of co-operation should be committed to the preparation of young researchers to meet the demands for new types of a broader research competence in problem and solution-oriented research. A new Nordic pilot study course, sponsored by the Nordic Academy of Advanced Studies, was arranged in 2003.

The sixth volume of the Research Magazine was devoted to Mode 1 and Mode 2 of knowledge production and is published under the title: "Discussing Transdisciplinarity: Making Professions and the New Mode of Knowledge Production" (2004).

Well-known definitions identify Mode 1 as: "The complex of ideas, methods, values and norms that has grown up to control the diffusion of the Newtonian model of science to more and more fields of inquiry and ensure its compliance with what is considered sound scientific practice". Mode 2 is characterised "Knowledge production carried out in the context of application and marked by its transdisciplinarity, heterogeneity, social accountability,

reflexivity and quality control which emphasises context- and use-dependence. It results from the parallel expansion of knowledge producers and users in society" (Gibbons et al, 1996:167).

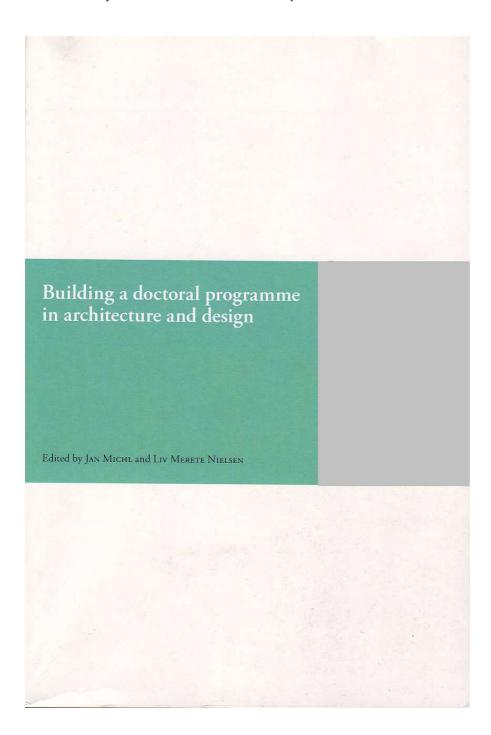
Bryan Lawson, a prominent international design scholar, advocates Mode 2 as a new "in practice model" of research that has emerged and become increasingly important. Lawson states that Gibbons and his co-authors distinguish Mode 2 from "the traditional natural science view of research. It is, they [i.e. Gibbons et al] claim, less about gaining knowledge and finding causes and more about solving problems and predicting effects, it is less oriented to peers and more towards clients, it develops consensual knowledge rather than rule-based knowledge and is more often practiced in the field by cross discipline groups than in the laboratories of the old discipline-based academic departments. Design fits this description pretty well. Perhaps we are just ahead of the game rather than behind it after all" (Lawson, 2002:114). It has already been argued that the concept of Norwegian studies in art and design education was, since its beginning in 1976 transdisciplinary in its core; this transdisciplinarity appears to have occurred without full self-awareness. (Fure, 2007:22-23).



One of the most recent debates at the AHO has arisen from the recognition on the part of the staff involved in the doctoral education that there already existed a "continuum from scientific

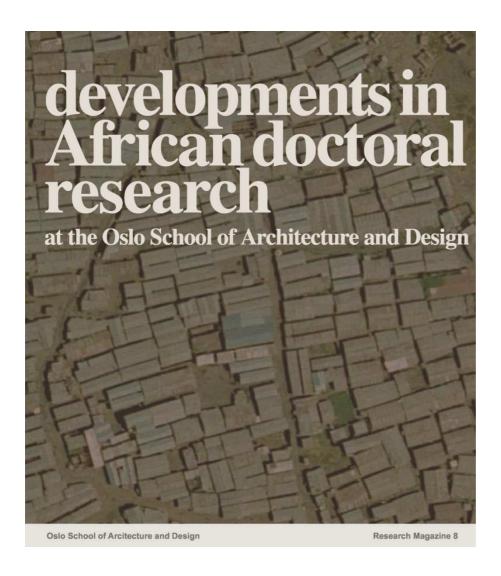
research to creative practice" in various fields of inquiry, even in the traditional academic fields. That recognition was shared with the external scholars who act as "gatekeepers" when assessing doctoral work. It resulted in the acceptance of some PhD theses in which the doctoral students integrated their own creative practice into the doctoral project, not only as illustration, but also as argumentation. This new academic stance within the institution began in 2004³. Thus the Doctoral Programme at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design has entered a new path of research through creative practice of art and design. This new recognition of the strategic importance of "research in which the professional and / or creative practices of art, design or architecture play an instrumental part in an inquiry" (Rust et al, 2007:11) has coincided with the development of the so-called practice-led research in art, design and architecture in other European countries. The triadic concept of the Master studies of the Norwegian Arts and Design Education also seems akin to this development which offers epistemological support to the practice of more than 30 years. While the traditional models of doctoral work continue to be valid, (and even dominating), the new model seems to have had a vigorous start as a parallel approach.

The seventh volume of Research Magazine (2005) "Building a doctoral programme in architecture and design" charted the development from 1990 – 2005, as experienced and recalled by the "users" of the Doctoral Programme, the institution's own PhD students, internal and international teachers, the alumni and alumnae. This volume presented the names of 109 internal and international teachers who contributed to the doctoral education at the AHO. It did not report on parts of the curriculum which were organised "extra muros" or in co-operation with other academic institutions, such as other Nordic schools of architecture and design, and also in other countries, such as University College London, and Bauhaus Universität Weimar.



Research Magazine No 8 (completed in 2006, but printed in 2007), appeared under the title "Developments in African doctoral research at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design". It was devoted to the research education which was offered to a cohort of African architects in the period 2002 – 2005. The publication presented their doctoral projects and commentary on their experience of the Doctoral Programme in Oslo, both academically and socially.

The presence of this cohort has enriched the milieu around the Programme and has made the global issues of architectural and design discourse more present in the school. Further cooperation with the African alumni can strengthen these issues in the future development of the Doctoral Programme at the school.



The start of the doctoral studies by cohort eight in the autumn of 2006 marked a quarter of a century since the School of Architecture was given the right to confer the degree of PhD in 1981. A new cohort, number nine, has begun their doctoral studies this fall, in September 2008. A group among this cohort of new PhD students is going to pursue their doctoral studies "by art / by design". Thus, the practice-based epistemological development, commenced in the Norwegian arts and design community - the "making milieu"- years ago, will be given a new opportunity to strengthen their field-specific scholarship.

Some Concluding Notes on Various Outcomes of the Doctoral Studies at the Oslo School of Architecture

There can be various forms of 'outcome' of doctoral studies. Possibly the most important are the new PhD holders themselves. Another is their academic input in the form of their doctoral theses. For an academic institution, the most important outcome, in bureaucratic terms, is the number of PhD degrees achieved by their alumni in a year and / or over time.

For a doctoral programme, a key outcome is the programme syllabus itself which has developed in a try-and-fail process of most research education and heightened its academic standards. The contributions to developing field-specific theoretical frameworks as bases of such syllabi represent another possible product. Yet another, indirect, effect is the

development of new fields of inquiry, when the doctoral alumni work individually in their post-doctoral life.

The present Oslo School of Architecture and Design can boast 40 alumni who were awarded with their doctoral degrees in the period of time between 1985 – 2007. The majority of them are architects, but other ADA fields, like landscape architects, industrial designers, planners, art and design educators and artists, are represented among them. Where did they go after having graduated from the doctoral programme? Simple statistics were generated based on the school's website. As many as 15 returned to their professional practice; another 12 are university teachers in their own fields. Two returned to their previous work as professional researchers while another three retired as the age of Norwegian doctoral students is very high. Of the 40 successful PhD students, 7 are the institution's own teachers who are now devotedly engaged as doctoral supervisors. One student who earned a PhD was successful in achieving a post-doctoral grant from the Norwegian Research Council.

With the admission to the doctoral programme of various design professionals, including those from art and design education, a broader dialogue has been initiated. Various profession-related discourses confronted each other. A need had arisen for a common arena for scholarly discussion; the concept of the "making disciplines" has emerged and gradually consolidated as one of the epistemological premises for the design research education as a result. The concept of the "making disciplines" evolved, thus, from the need to establish a common intellectual platform for the doctoral students from various "making" professions, but it can be also regarded as a more general, theoretical framework in itself. A contribution to the first volume of FormAkademisk, written by one of the alumnae of the Doctoral Programme, Professor Liv Merete Nielsen, reports from and discusses some direct and indirect "results" of doctoral studies performed by the PhD holders with art and design education background.

In this closing part of the paper, it seems appropriate to present a voice of one of the alumni who talks about how he experienced the Doctoral Programme at the Oslo School of Architecture and how the degree has impacted on his work process. These two quotations of his account can be regarded as a certain "result" of his doctoral studies.

At first it was all too abstract, too complicated, and too unrelated to our research areas. But initial worries quickly gave way to excitement as we freed our minds to receive the knowledge. We soon became capable of saying complicated academic words (...) without biting our tongues. Given the particularly heady academic cocktail that was concocted for us, it was inevitable that the little boxes of our research topics were eventually smashed to open up our minds to broad new vistas of knowledge (Sanya,2005:81-82).

I have learnt to see beyond my research topic to the interconnectedness of knowledge. I have especially started to see the interconnectedness of the design professions. The seemingly incongruous mix of fashion and industrial designers and architects that we had in some of the PhD seminars has helped to see that we are all just designers who contribute to the making of artefacts. And that design is just a statement of intention – such that the role of the designer is not merely to design but also to ensure that the object (be it a building, an apparel or a tool) crystallises according to a plan. That indeed for the wider society, just as objects must be created according to a design, a good communal plan must be backed up by a good implementation strategy so that the result turns out as intended (Sanya,2005:83) (4).

Postscript

During the 27 years of its existence, the doctoral studies programme at the Oslo School of Architecture has been a serious, collective endeavour in the milieu of the School and the institutions collaborating with it. This endeavour would not be possible without contributions from several individual contributors. In the initial period of establishing the organised

research education, great support was given by the school's first professors of Philosophy of Science, both affiliated with the University of Oslo: Stein Haugom Olsen (1992 – 1998) and Matthias Kaiser (1998 – 2005). Since the merger of the Institute of Industrial Design with the school, Professor Jan Michl has been responsible for that part of the curriculum which was tailored for the designers among the PhD students. Since the beginnings of the Doctoral Programme in 1992, two Scandinavian professors have been central in the development of the doctoral curricula, as well as leaders of the co-operation between AHO and their own institutions. These were Professor Jerker Lundquist from the School of Architecture, Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, and Professor Niels Albertsen, from the Aarhus School of Architecture. Since 2004, Professor Liv Merete Nielsen of the Oslo University College has been responsible for the area of the doctoral curriculum which concerns research education for design educators.

The endeavours of all of them have been supported by several people who backed the effort along the way. Among these, the late Professor Dr. Kristoffer Apeland, the long-standing chairman of the Research Committee at the AHO, should be mentioned as the earliest and possibly most important strategic collaborator and supporter. Since 1999 and until 2001, he was followed by the then Pro-rector Professor Karl Otto Ellefsen as the chairman of the Research Committee. In the daily administrative workload, the Doctoral Programme was greatly assisted by Research Administration officers Ranveig Rasmussen (until 1997), then by Åse Nyvoll (until 1998), and since then by Ingunn Gjørva, who has been one of the key individuals supporting the Doctoral Programme in her role in the research administration (1998 – 2007).

In December 2003, Ingunn Gjørva, the Senior Advisor for the Research Administration, and Professor Dr. Halina Dunin-Woyseth, the Director of the Doctoral Programme, submitted to the School's Research Committee an extensive report on the development of doctoral studies at the AHO (1992 – 2002) in an internal publication, "Selfevaluation" (Dunin-Woyseth and Gjørva, 2003). This report formed the basis for the institution's internal evaluation, which was executed by three alumni of the School's Doctoral Programme. As a consequence, a new organisational structure was introduced. A Programme Committee for the Doctoral Curriculum was established, chaired by Dr. Mari Hvattum, and it was joined by several persons from among the staff of the School who were involved in doctoral education. In January 2005, the Programme Committee began its work which resulted in a new Programme Structure for Research Education at the School; the new structure was adopted by the School's Research Committee in December that same year. The Programme Committee continued from January 2006 under the aegis of an alumnus of the Doctoral Programme, Dr. Jonny Aspen, with the objective of preparing a curriculum for the eighth Cohort, who began their doctoral studies in the autumn of 2006. Two years later, this position was taken over by an alumna of the Doctoral Programme, Dr. Margrethe Dobloug.

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¹ The use of the concept ADA for the fields of Art, Design & Architecture has been observed in the UK relevant literature, -- see Rust et al (2007, p.6).

² The concepts "making professions" and "making disciplines" were introduced to research education by Halina Dunin-Woyseth in the 90s (Dunin-Woyseth, 1996). The concepts were discussed in, among other publications, Research Magazine No4 / 2001 "Towards a Disciplinary Identity of the Making Professions". They have been used in Scandinavia in the research education context (for instance by Grange [2002]) or in the doctoral courses at the Department of Conservation, University of Gothenburg in October 2008. They are being recognized as innovative for their epistemological specificity with regard to the professions of making' in the "Overview about European Doctorates in Architecture" (p.76, Chapter 1, Proceedings from the ENHSAs conference "Shaping the Curriculum in the Higher Education Area", Hania, Crete, 3-6 September 2003). Downloaded 6 October 2008 from www.enhsa.net/headsmeetings2003proceedings.htm.)

The accepted theses are: "Mellan tecken, teckning, teori och text; ackttechning i ett kontextuellt, diskursivt och paradigmatiskt perspektiv" by Eirin Pedersen (2004) and "Developing Digital Design Techniques: Creative Design Computing" by Birger Sevaldson (2005). Another project in this category (doctoral research based on own creative practice), close to its completion, is the project by Bård Helland: "Forholdet mellom byggekonstruksjon og uttrykkskonstruksjon i en moderne arkitektur. En drøftelse av utvalgte verker av Herzog & de Meuron og en undersøkelse gjennom egen prosjektering", Two other projects are in their early stages: "Touch" by Kjetil Nordby and "Augmented Reality – visualisation tool for architecture and urban planning projects" by Halvor Høgset. There are many research projects to be based on the concept of "research by design" by the 19 PhD students who have started their doctoral studies as Cohort 9 in the fall semester of 2008.

⁴ This article is based on the author's numerous publications on the subject of the AHO's Doctoral Programme in the period 1991 - 2007.