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to cite this journal article

Verwijnen, J. (2002) Knowledge centra
to the generation of form. *Working
Papers in Art and Design* :
Retrieved <date> from URI
[http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/artdes_research
papers/wpades
vol2/verwignen.htm](http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/artdes_research_papers/wpades_vol2/verwignen.htm)
ISSN 1466-491'

It seems to me that in art and design research the main problem is perhaps not to contribute to knowledge a new perspective, an original thought, a deeper understanding in the field of study, because coming up with an original thought is what designers have been trained to do. However, with what method do they do that, particularly if the contribution is a design or work of art itself? In this context I do not like the phrase 'practice-based doctorates', because it not only seems to reinforce precisely the divisions between theory and practice that we are all trying to get away from, but particularly because the term praxis neglects the role of projects. The term practice-based tends to focus too strongly on the improvement of techniques and does not open up a debate to how projects and their creative processes may fundamentally contribute to knowledge. In a discipline, in which a practice of the production of (object) form dominates, current methods are not necessarily connected to the production of knowledge, but to the production of new form and are not necessarily shared. Further the question of method cannot be separated from the problem of the knowledge it is supposed to help produce. In order for the design process to become part of a body of knowledge that contains more than form or style description the design process needs above all to be conceptualised. The question thus becomes how to include (design) projects into knowledge as knowledge central to the generation of form. Design is a material practice - an activity that works in and among the world of things - that condenses, transforms and materializes concepts. I propose to understand the notion of concept as the need for an idea within the field of professional imagination that guides the concrete decision-making process and keeps the design together - the concept as a generator of form. This idea is not final or finished form (yet), but an interim result between problem analyses and final solution. Different disciplines operate with different ranges of imagination. Historical imagination and design imagination are fundamentally different. Design has to operate prescriptively, not descriptively. Within the world of objects exists thus a rupture between descriptive (design products) and prescriptive (design process) modes of operation. In other words descriptive discourse in design (i.e. existing design history and theory) does not easily lead to design methods; its relevance for the design process is limited - designers work with other methods.

Within a design process the concept may be understood as the generation of a personal idea illustrated by analogies, diagrams, sketches etc. that guide the design process, that help to make coherent decisions by the designers and that can be communicated and discussed in an early stage of the project. Concepts are ideas formed by the process of abstraction and provide categories for storing experience, in our case of projects and their relationship to other projects, their presence in the past.