

PRE ARCHITECTURA
LEARNING THROUGH SPACE

THESES

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Budapest, 2015

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Some of the theses of Pre Architectura are seemingly evident declarations. However, probably due to the general aim of acceptance in education-policies, these basic statements are so far absent from the literature of spatial learning and architecture education for children; therefore, their articulation appears to be essential.

1. Spatial learning, which is the essence of all architectural knowledge, effectively happens through spatial perception and creation tasks. Building, in terms of the 'Learning By Doing' form of architecture and spatial education, teaches about the spatial environment by definition.
2. Spatial learning as an activity provides the foundation of most learning processes. The development of spatial knowledge and environmental cognition develop the structure of the brain improving both the logic and memory system, and, therefore, are essential as the starting point of further learning processes. Spatial cognition happens in the hippocampus, which is also responsible for processing short-term memories into long-term memories. Since the hippocampus can develop throughout the entire lifetime of a human being, spatial learning exercises are beneficial at all ages.
3. Experiencing architecture takes significant time and requires active participation from the participating person. Even though we perceive our built environment as instantaneous impulses, the process of reconstructing the surrounding space and understanding its layers consumes time and demands both unconscious and conscious work from the participant.
4. The cognition of an 'Inner 3D', when the self experiences its integration in the surrounding space, is different than the cognition of an 'Outer 3D', when the self is looking at the space from an exterior point of view. The spatial learning tasks and building in real scale, where the participant is surrounded by the space being discovered or created, provide the grounds for experiencing the 'Inner 3D' with an intensity of the learning event - the change from not-knowing to knowing as the ultimate human event, which is hardly present in contemporary educational curricula.

5. Space-philosophy and medium-philosophy provide yet undiscovered interpretations and guidelines in understanding spatial learning processes. The initiatives of philosophy have always been geared towards a deeper understanding of the world through the analysis of human existence in the agent and medium of its surroundings. The systematic structures of philosophical classics (e.g. Platon: *Timaeus*, Martin Heidegger: *The Origin of the Work of Art*), as well as the development of phenomenology (Maurice Merleau-Ponty), the explorations of intentionality (Edmund Husserl), and the initiatives of evental philosophy (Slavoj Žižek), have parallel observations to spatial learning processes.

6. Discovering the spatial environment is an adequate and effective tool for teaching the learning process itself because the contrast between the familiar and the new therein easily triggers the Aha Moment, the learning event itself, which in new generations, who are used to multiple sensory irritation, is hardly within reach any more. Spatial exercises are applicable on many levels: physiologically, through stimulating the development of the hippocampus; psychologically, through space-learning instead of path-learning; and motivationally, due to the joy-experiences of gaining knowledge through the exercises.

7. The co-operation of children and university students of architecture in spatial learning is beneficial for all participants on multiple levels in the current educational schemes. The confrontation of the children's open curiosity and the students' academic architectural knowledge results in a productive combination of knowledge and creativity, completing the existing curricula both on elementary school and university levels.

8. The presence of architects is necessary in spatial and architectural education. Spatial learning processes target understanding of the surroundings through the medium of architecture: space, which exhibits particular properties unlike any other field of arts or sciences. On some level of built environment education - either by teaching the children directly or educating the teachers and facilitators - the involvement of architects is indispensable as they are accustomed to the attributes and possibilities of space, a realm, which is hardly approachable for those who are not trained in architecture.