

Learning by doing

Learning by doing is a retrospective project, which focuses on EXPERIENCE as a conduit for learning. The guiding question "HOW have I learned?" formulated in a context of paradigm shift at three scales: global, optional and personal.

On a global level, an uncertain future enhanced, among other factors, by the health crisis and the climate crisis. The pedagogue John Dewey considered at the end of the 19th century that someone prepared for future living was one with control over herself; her eye, her ear, and her hand, instruments ready to be used; his judgment, capable of understanding the conditions under which he will have to operate.

On a facultative level, beyond a vision of the architect as a generator of atmospheres or designer of construction details, the transversal architect as part of a collective with social commitment, environmental responsibility and interdisciplinary knowledge to detect projects in all situations, analyze the needs, formulate questions and discover answers beyond the iconographic architectural object.

On a personal level, the end of a new stage of my university studies in architecture. It is, in this context of changes, where I find it necessary to open a reflection on learning processes, with the aim of "making education and science that which allows us to live free from fear and free from domination", in words of the philosopher Marina Garcés. An intellectual emancipation that Jacques Rancière conceived as the very end of education - to enable the student to put his intelligence at the service of his will.

In the article "Emancipando arquitectos: del Rural Studio al Vallès" Roger Sauquet exposes how, inspired by references such as Rural Studio or the Bauhaus, the learning by doing teaching method is gaining ground at the Vallès School of Architecture, generating multiple emancipatory experiences.

Learning from experience has been a characteristic feature of the ETSAV since its foundation; a practical introductory course to the pioneering project began in Spanish universities in 1978 by the hand of the architects Pere Riera, Dani Freixes and Josep M. Gutiérrez, the sculptor Jordi Pablo and the designer Jordi Maña.

Almost three decades later, professors Coque Claret, Dani Calatayud and AUS, the COAC sustainability group, created PAUS, an active learning space focused on the practical application of the notion of sustainability and the germ of a new link between teaching, research and business. This was the context of a series of collective projects devised, designed and self-constructed by students of the faculty, initially in an optional academic format and later as part of the elective Project Workshops of the last courses of the degree, the so-called TAP VII Pud, now the Pud-Ptx confederation.

AUS was the link between the university and the "El Primer Paso" project, a stand provided by the Department of Environment and Housing of the Generalitat in the Construmat 2007, with a second life in the campus as a space of free appropriation by the students of these projects. Ten years later, NGO Seo BirdLife and the Rietvell rice cooperative asked AUS for advice about the rehabilitation of their buildings in Ebro Delta

Natural Reserve, where rice production and study and preservation of native fauna is managed by volunteers from all over the world who make temporary stays at the farm. This request became a new educational project opportunity for the Pud Workshop. In September 2018, the first generation of Apatacoja emerged - a collective, self-built, energy rehabilitation project in Rietvell.

At that time, I was at the Lisbon Architecture School with an Erasmus Grant, an experience which gave birth to a special interest in the empirical investigation of sociological concepts; there, we worked with the methodology of life stories formulated by Daniel Bertaux within the framework of the Urban Sociology course, directed by Professor Teresa Vasconcelos; in my case, conducting a study of the concepts of community and artisan work based on a series of informal conversations and interviews with Avieiros fishermen from the Povia de Santa Iria settlement.

Conversely, I worked on the representation tools starting from the experimentation with materials guided by the teacher Pedro Januario and linked to the Laboratori de Prototipatge of the FAUL.

My experience in Apatacoja began after returning from Lisbon; at that point in time the project was beginning along with the third semester and it has continued to this day. It has been a learning space where many students have translated from paper to reality for the first time - working on sketches and technical drawings, implementation, dissemination of the project, obtaining sponsors, managing tools, security and the logistics of the human team. Apatacoja includes many projects within a project, an experimentation laboratory that has brought together more than one hundred ETSAV students so far.

There are two determining initial conditions: it is a collective project and it had to be built starting from a zero budget. Group work is a characteristic feature of the architecture school, yet on this occasion the complexity lies in the size of the group; dozens of students with diverse personal interests have to move forward together towards the same goal. We organize ourselves using an assembly structure subdivided into commissions which works in parallel.

Jordi Mitjans, Coque Claret, Daniel Calatayud and Oriol Muntaner, professors of the Confederation of Pud-Ptx Workshops, take on a role of companions, generating content sessions on demand according to the evolution of student interests, managing moments of crisis and giving an informed opinion about the progress of the projects.

There are two other key gears in the Apatacoja constellation of agents: the industrial sector and the local network.

The link with companies is not only understood as a source of material and sponsorship, but also as advisory and technical training agents as well as a door for shared research and experimentation with new materials.

The local network, agents of sociological knowledge of the reality of the territory and the immediate diffusion of our intervention, as well as the main source of maintenance

during construction stays in the Ebro Delta. Stays, ranging from one to three weeks, where building, living together and projecting feed off each other; the need to work as a team to overcome difficulties empowers many students who find determination in situ and acquire decision-making power and responsibility during the intervention; a space-time that allows a learning format from reflective experience to be born, defined by John Dewey as a reorganizing experience of reality - thought that becomes experience.

200 km from the Nature Reserve, within the ETSAV campus, teaching also takes on a particular format, leaving the conventional collective classroom behind to navigate between the workshop space and the PAUS platform. The methodology of argumentation as a content discovery process that leads to answers emanates from the agile actions of drawing and prototyping, inspired by the design process of architects such as Jean Prouvé. "Learning by experience is establishing a backward and forward connection between what we do and what we enjoy or suffer from things, as a consequence," in the words of pedagogue John Dewey. Amadeu Santacana exposed in a series of talks organized by Apatacoja the critical sense, the notions and the action as the content indispensable for him in the faculty projects- although it would be normal that one or the other took on more weight depending on the case.

As for the continent, I would name constellation, materiality and space-time, not only as the particularities of a full-scale project like Apatacoja, but also as inputs to the process of any emancipatory experience. Determination, the interest of the individual himself, as an engine of learning.

I consider Apatacoja as the greatest exponent of the learning method through the experience of my five years in the architecture degree, but I find it interesting to analyze the methodology in two other projects that have also been key in my learning: Vecatio, in the context of TAP X , and La Barcelona Oculta, in TAP IV.

Vecatio is a project that seeks alternatives for the drawing of the post-industrial landscape of Colonia Güell, taking into account the historical and architectural value of the warehouses and taking advantage of the infrastructure to support the social needs of the environment.

Professors Xavier Vancells, Enrique Soriano and Torsten Masseck proposed the use of the calculated uncertainty operating strategy: taking as a reference the design approaches of the architect Cedric Price, the project does not seek a conclusive answer, but rather a sustainable process of transformation over time. In the experience that was TAP X, during which I worked in tandem with Adrià Marqués, the strategic drawing and the open debate (both with classmates and with teachers) were the tools to formulate the questions regarding the future of a specific space-time, destined to a wide range of collectives. The working model as the approach to materiality.

Hidden Barcelona is a project where each group of students delves into the reality of a marginalized group of the city to detect those needs to which architecture could respond. Together with Mireia Faus and Arnau Palau, we formulated our statement based on the empirical study of dependent sectors, focusing on the need of spaces for

psychological treatment in order to reintegrate them into society. The teachers, Lluís Jubert, Josep Ricart and Amadeu Santacana, as active critical companions and generators of new inputs, of which an example was the medium term inclusion of a conventional program to be strategically crossed with each self-defined statement; in our case, a library. The starting point of this TAP IV was then a completely open statement, which proposed as initial conditions teamwork (as a tool of reflection), interaction with the members of the chosen marginalized collective and the models, the Pere IV axis as space of opportunity.

Regarding content, I consider the three layers mentioned by Amadeu present in the three projects mentioned, although, on a personal level, Hidden Barcelona was the catalyst for the development of my critical sense towards architecture, Vecatio provided a paradigm of strategic application of the notions and Apatacoja raised awareness of the mechanisms of action.

From the rest of the years in the faculty, I could cite other active learning, such as the realization of real-scale models for the constructive study of various buildings in the Pells subject, the building site monitoring carried out within the framework of the subjects of Technology I and II, the experimentation of the form based on materials in Bases para el Proyecto or the learning of the basic notions of hydrothermal control by working with a prototype in Bases for the Technique. However, learning from experience, not only as an object of the regulated educational field, but also applicable in the analysis of a whole series of learnings of that individual who opts for proactivity as a vital attitude towards everything that he does not know.

Cooperating, teaching, writing, declaiming, traveling, analyzing, touching, making mistakes ...

This approach to emancipatory experiences as a vehicle for learning and the perception of the process as the space of opportunity could be considered the result of a set of subjective perceptions. Even without premeditation, by the time we are born, it cannot be denied that our first learnings arise from a series of emancipatory experiences.

The index that my Degree in Architecture studies at ETSAV has helped me develop, prepared after a retrospective trip made without a map and carried by the compass of intuition (perception of a series of hidden connections), giving me a new lens to my glasses, from which I perceive the world with the sensitivity typical of literature and architecture as my reference disciplines, as well as all the disciplines that both encompass transversely.

Taking different formats, I have found in the continuum of lived learning the seven components mentioned, those which I consider inputs of the emancipatory experience proposed as the vehicle of active learning. Components formulated not as a recipe, since the canons take space away from surprise, but as their own definition of constants found in the active learning experiences that I have experienced during my 24 years of existence, crossed with readings, both from the field of architecture and pedagogy and philosophy, as well as with the reflective accompaniment of a whole constellation that

has been built both deliberately and unexpectedly and, although the signing of this final degree project bears my name, I also consider it has contributed to the result as much as myself. The direct constellation, which is formed by all those who have participated in the conversations of these five months as a space-time frame of the TFG of the autumn semester 2020/21, but also the indirect one, all those who have given throughout these 24 years of experiences shared meaning to the words of Pere Riera in his doctoral thesis "Imparting is sharing": "Learning ceases to be a calculated risk and becomes an unpredictable debate".

From the set of uncertainties, learning, as the methodological process of argumentation and not of justification of a preconceived product; a project that only makes sense when it has generated so many questions that it still takes time to discover the answers. The eighth component of the emancipatory experience, the reflection, both personal and collective, of the experience lived live in order to become aware in a delayed way of the learning obtained.

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“Aprenent fent”

TFG QmT 2020-21

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